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A STUDY OF
CROSS-CULTURAL DECISION-MAKING STYLES
IS COGNITIVE MAPPING AN EFFECTIVE METHODOLOGY
FOR DATA ANALYSIS?

by

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Abstract

In an increasingly globalised business environment, the behaviour and performance of managers from one country and culture working in another has never been more relevant. Of particular interest is the behaviour of expatriate managers from the west, working in Asian-owned or joint-venture companies situated in East Asia, and making decisions individually and as a group. The current study differs from many that are based around questionnaires and a quantitative methodology. It is a qualitative investigation into expatriate French managers based in China, and working in Chinese and French-Chinese companies. The choice of French managers situated in China is based on the distinct differences in culture, and the author's own background as a Chinese manager working with French colleagues. The familiarity of the author with both the Chinese and French business cultures is important for useful interpretation of the data. The understanding of both cultures used in creating the methodology, interviewing, analysing and interpreting the data is an important and distinctive aspect of the research. The research looks at the managers' choice of individual or group decision-making styles, and the factors that influence the managers' choices in different cultural contexts. It uses cognitive mapping techniques to analyse 20 interview transcripts. The study concluded that cognitive mapping is a viable methodology to gain insights into the managers' individual and group decision-making styles. This methodology provided an opportunity to follow the managers' thinking around the choices they made, and to identify the factors that influence the managers' decision-making styles and process.

In memory of my father Yu Pu YANG (杨玉璞), 1931–2004.

And, my colleague and mentor Geoff Mallory (d. 2012).

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Chapter One Introduction

This chapter aims to present a comprehensive overview of the research project, the research question and the dissertation. It begins by introducing the background to the research then lays out aims, objectives and the expected contribution to the research community. The structure of the dissertation is introduced at the end of this chapter.

1.1 Background

This research explores how cognitive mapping can help to understand the observed behaviours of management's choice of decision-making in a cross-cultural context. It is a qualitative investigation of a group of expatriate managers, and looks at their choice of individual or group decision-making styles in their host culture and home culture, and the factors that influence the managers' choices in different cultural contexts. The study seeks to answer the following research question:

Is cognitive mapping an effective methodology for a cross-cultural study of decision-making styles? And how can cognitive mapping help one to understand the observed behaviours of the manager's choice of decision-making style in a cross-cultural context?

It has been noted that the majority of studies on decision-making styles use questionnaires and a quantitative methodology; and that there has been disagreement in prior studies on the different individual or group decision-making styles and the contextual factors that influence them. This study suggests that a qualitative methodology of cognitive mapping and interpretation approach is an appropriate

methodology to study the decision-making styles and the influencing factors. Cognitive mapping helps to organise and analyse raw qualitative data, and interpretation helps one to understand the meaning of the context in which decision-making styles are chosen. By making sense of the social world of the organisation's participants, this methodology helps one to understand how managers make sense of their social and cultural context, and how they choose different decision-making styles when making decisions.

The next section discusses the rationale of the research project and the significance of the research area.

1.2 Aims and objectives

This section summarises the literature and methodology of this research project, and introduces the aims and objectives of this study.

1.2.1 The literature of cross-cultural decision-making

Decision-making is one of the most exercised of managerial functions performed by managers in all types of organisation. The study of decision-making, consequently, has long been a focus of sustained effort in organisational theory and management. Many researchers have taken the approach of examining managers' decision-making styles, which is the focus of this study.

Originating in Anglo-American management research (March, 1965), theories in decision-making have started from single-country studies (Axelsson et al., 1991, Kumar and Yauger, 1998), and have since widened in scope. Globalisation has increasingly taken managers to different parts of the world, where they work with managers from very different cultural backgrounds (Rugman, 2005, Harvey and Moeller, 2009). In the last few decades, this internationalisation of management has spread outside North America and Europe, and into other areas such as East and South Asian countries.

With increasingly international business and management activities, cross-cultural studies on decision-making have interested researchers in different countries. However, theory development and basic research on cross-cultural decision-making are more developed in North American and Western European countries than in other parts of the world (Radford et al., 1991, Darwish, 1998). Furthermore, owing to the diversity and complexity of the conceptual, theoretical, methodological and practical issues in cultural research, large amounts of literature produce divergent, contradictory and confusing conclusions on cultural comparative management research. Cross-cultural research on decision-making processes separate from, and in relation with, North American and West European cultural contexts is therefore a timely and important issue. This research seeks to address the methodological issues and explore the effectiveness of the cognitive mapping methodology in cross-cultural decision-making studies.

This study selects two cultural contexts that have differing characteristics, and at least one of the two should be outside North America and Western Europe (Radford et al.,

1991, Darwish, 1998). The chosen scenario was the decision-making styles of a group of French expatriate managers working in China.

In the past few decades China has exhibited rapid economic development. It is now the second largest economy in the world with GDP growth averaging about 10 percent per year; yet it still faces many political, social and economic challenges. With its rapid growth and changes, the country has become one of the most interesting places for management researchers and practitioners.

French managers were selected for various reasons. Firstly, literature (e.g. Hofstede 1980, 1988) indicates that French culture has many distinct differences to Chinese culture, though this applies to many countries in Western Europe. Secondly, France has the biggest concentration of expatriates in Shanghai, China, which helps in recruitment of appropriate participants for the study. Furthermore, the author has the language skills and extensive knowledge of both Chinese and French management practice and cultures. This helps in the interpretation of information in the cognitive maps.

The next section presents an overview of the research design and methodology.

1.2.2 Methodology and research design

The research design is based on a combination of cognitive mapping and interpretation. Cognitive maps help to identify relevant information in the interview transcripts and organise the content into a visual representation of the managers'

thinking process for different decision-making styles. They are an excellent tool to organise a large amount of data by identifying relevant information and pathways. These maps provide a structured content for interpretation and discussion (Eden 1992).

A group of expatriate managers were interviewed about their decision-making style choices in the home culture and host culture. The managers' cognitive reasoning for choosing either individual or group decision-making styles is examined when they make decisions in different cultural contexts. Based on their thinking process the transcripts were converted to cognitive maps. Cognitive mapping structures the content for interpretation and discussion of the managers' observed decision-making behaviour. The result of the examination identifies the contextual variables that influence the managers' choices of using individual and/or group decision-making styles; and the reasons for any differences or similarities of decision-making practice in the home and host culture. The next section outlines the contributions that this study seeks to make to the field.

1.3 Expected contribution

The literature reviewed in the next chapter indicates that there are gaps in the analysis of cross-cultural decision-making. The majority of previous studies in this area have adopted a quantitative data-analysis methodology, and concentrated on the relationship between managers and their superiors or subordinates.

This research proposes that a qualitative methodology can be a powerful alternative for studies on cross-cultural decision-making styles. Specifically, cognitive mapping

is an effective tool to organise and analyse the data. It helps the researcher to follow the rationale of the managers' decision-making style choices, and the factors that influence the process. It helps one to understand the relationship between the managers and both their peers and subordinates, through analysis of decision-making styles.

The last section of this chapter introduces the structure of this dissertation.

1.4 Structure

The dissertation is structured in six chapters. The present chapter – Chapter One – forms the introduction.

Chapter two provides a detailed literature review on related subjects, including decision-making and decision-making styles; the concepts of culture and national culture; cross-cultural studies on decision-making styles; and some methodological debates on cross-cultural research which informs the research design.

Chapter three discusses the methodological issues for this research, and provides detailed information on the suitability of the methodology that is used for this research.

Chapters four and five describe the data analysis, from interview transcript to cognitive maps, to the final interpretation and discussion. And finally, Chapter six outlines the findings and conclusions.

Chapter Two Literature Review

2.1 Introduction

This research sets out to investigate in what way cognitive mapping methodology can help to understand managers' decision-making styles in organisations, and the contextual factors that impact on the decision-making styles in a cross-cultural context. It examines the managers' choice of adopting individual and / or group decision-making styles to make specific decisions in different national cultures. The focus is on how a cognitive mapping methodology can help to organise and analyse qualitative data for interpretation.

This literature review covers five subject areas that are relevant for this project. First of all, it provides an overview of research on decision-making and its process, which is of utmost importance to organisational theory. This is followed by a detailed review of research on decision-making styles, which is one of the important approaches to understand managers' decision-making process. However, the review indicates that the inter-cultural aspects of the decision-making styles are under studied and this provides an excellent prospect for conducting interesting and challenging research.

Before the cross-cultural studies of decision-making styles are reviewed, the literature on national culture is visited briefly. This establishes that national culture is a valid theoretical construct and justifies the postulate of nation-based cultural studies. This literature also sets the criteria for research sample selection in the methodology. The last part of the literature reviews cross-cultural and inter-cultural research on decision-making styles. A large amount of literature in this subject area produces diversified,

contradictory, and confusing conclusions on cultural comparative management research. The literature suggests ways to improve the cross-cultural research, either to be more rigorous and inventive in research designs; or informing a reorientation of both research foci and methodologies.

A majority of the cross-cultural research on decision-making styles adopt a quantitative research methodology. There has been disagreement on decision-making styles and the factors that influencing the choice in prior studies. This research proposes the adoption of a qualitative methodology to explore the managers' perspective on the decision-making styles that they choose in making different decisions, and the cognitive reasoning behind these choices. The last section argues that interpretation supported by a cognitive mapping methodology helps us to understand the process of managers' decision-making styles. It offers a new opportunity to understand the manager's decision-making process.

The next section introduces the literature on managerial decision-making.

2.2 Decision-making: an important and complex subject

Decision-making is one of the most exercised of managerial functions performed by managers in all types of organisation (Simon, 1960, Mintzberg, 1973, Mckenzie et al., 2009). The study of decision-making has long been a focus of sustained effort in organisational theory and management (for example, (Barnard, 1938, March and Simon, 1958, Simon, 1960, Mintzberg, 1973, Hickson et al., 1986, Butler et al., 1993, Hammond, 1999, Miller and Chen, 2004, Jansen et al., 2011, Beck and Wiersema,

2013). Ever since Barnard (1938) introduced the term “decision-making” into the business world, its importance has been acknowledged by many researchers listed in the references above. In the pioneering study on decision-making, Nobel Laureate Simon (1960) has suggested that decision-making is synonymous with the management of an organisation. Since the organisation is formed and shaped by different types of decisions and their consequences, organisational decision-making researchers regard an organisation as a locus for decision-making activity, (Harrison, 1987, McKenzie et al., 2009, Shepherd and Rudd, 2013).

Research into decision-making started circa World War II, with the needs of the United States military leading personnel to search for efficient ways to manage large and complex organizations. Application of the findings to behavioural science began later, around the 1960s. “Behavioural decision theory” (March, 1965) distinguished this broader social science approach from earlier economic theories of decision-making. There is a large volume of literature that informs this topic, which includes all scientific, behavioural and environmental aspects: quantitative disciplines, contributions from philosophy, sociology, psychology, social psychology and cross-cultural studies of decision-making. In a review of the theoretical foundation of managerial decision-making, Aharoni et al (2011) summarised new findings in managerial decision-making in the last few decades and argues that bounded rationality, cognitive limitations, biases and other behavioural findings have led to a paradigm shift in organisational science.

Decision-making occurs at all levels in an organisation. It is not only practised by top level executives, but also by middle and operating management (Hammond, 2011). At

the top level of an organisation, making important decisions is specifically an executive task (Drucker, 1967, Beck and Wiersema, 2013), and executives are judged on how successful they are in decision-making outcomes (Courtney et al., 2013). Likewise, decision-making is the most important function of managers at other levels, because the success or failure of any organization depends upon the outcome of many decisions (Barnard, 1938, Yukl, 1994, McKenzie et al., 2009). Furthermore, decision-making processes and outcomes have a meta-organisational effect on a large segment of society (Cray et al, 1991). The questions of “who” makes the decisions and “how” the decisions are made have shaped our political, judicial and social systems (Buchanan 2006). Consequently, research into decision-making has become a “palimpsest” of a wide range of academic disciplines (Buchanan 2006), which include for example, philosophy, sociology, psychology, computing science, to name just a few.

The literature referenced above has shown that decision-making is an important yet complex academic subject. The overview of the subject in this section helps us to understand the overall research outcome, and how it relates to the chosen research area, that is, the research into managers’ decision-making styles.

Facing the complexity of the issue and wide coverage of the intellectual disciplines, researchers studying decision-making typically select a segment of analysis and determine factors for study (Nutt 2008). Research into decision-making has often been divided into two categories, (1) content research and (2) process research (Elbanna and Child, 2007).

In the next section an overview of the two categories of research is presented, with a specific focus on the literature into decision-making process and decision-making styles.

2.3 Decision-making process and decision-making styles

As discussed in Section 2.2, decision-making is a complex and multi-disciplinary topic in academic research, which has often been divided into two general categories: content and process. Content research covers the types of decisions (Nutt 2008) and their outcomes (Rajagopalan 1997). Research into process, deals with how decisions are made and the contextual factors that influence the decision (Elbanna and Child 2007). Traditionally research into process issues have received relatively little attention compared to content issues (Rajagopalan et al., 1993), however there has been increasing and sustained interest in process topics in decision-making more recently (Cray et al., 1991, Rajagopalan et al., 1997, Elbanna and Child, 2007, Nutt, 2008, Shepherd and Rudd, 2013). Research has shown that the choice of decision-making process is related to decision success (Dean and Sharfman, 1996), and can improve the effectiveness of the decisions made (Shepherd and Rudd, 2013).

The decision-making process has been defined as a sequence of activities (Goll and Rasheed, 2005), or action-taking steps (Nutt, 2008) that a decision maker pursues to reach a decision. Therefore the focus of the research on process issues is the decision makers' actions as to how they make decisions and why certain actions are taken. Much research has concentrated on comprehending different elements of decision processes, describing different types and models of the process and its relationship to

decision outcomes (e.g. Cray et al., 1991, Dean and Sharfman, 1996, Nutt, 2008, Beck and Wiersema, 2013); Nutt (2008), for example, has reviewed four major decision-making processes from previous studies and offered insights on the decision-making processes that increased the chance of success. In the research it was found that the “Discovery” process was a more successful process compared to the other three (idea-imposition, emergent opportunity and redevelopment). Other research on decision-making process focuses on how managers make decisions, and the contextual variables that influence the actions (e.g. (Rowe and Boulgarides, 1983, Kaur, 1993, Thunholm, 2004, Dewberry et al., 2013). Many researchers have taken the approach of examining managers’ decision-making styles, which is the focus of this study.

Looking into the existing literature in research of the determinants of managerial decision-making process, there appear to be four broad trends with specific focuses which have identified environmental, organizational, decision-specific, and individual aspects as being important for understanding the nature of managerial decision-making processes. Therefore it is important to review the methodological options that can be employed to investigate these relevant factors in the decision-making process. The detailed literature is presented in the following section, Section 2.5.

Many researchers have argued for further research to study the finer nuances of decision-making process under specific conditions (Fredrickson, 1983, Cray et al., 1988, Rajagopalan et al., 1997, Yaprak, 2008, Shepherd and Rudd, 2013). In a critical review of strategic decision-making process Rajagopalan et al. (1993) modelled three categories of factors that influence directly the process: environmental factors, organizational factors, and decision-specific factors. The first trend is the studies of

environmental factors external to organizations, which has focussed largely on national culture, national economic conditions and industry conditions (Rajagopalan et al., 1993). The second trend, which is the research into organizational factors, has focussed largely on organizational structure, organizational culture, structure of decision makers, impact of upward influence, and employee involvement (Child, 1973; Simon, 1973; Kimberly and Rottman, 1987; Goll and Sambharya, 1990). The third emerging trend identified by Rjagopalan et al research into the decision-specific factors, of which the focus have been largely on decision-specific factors such as time, risk, complexity, and politics (Hickson et al., 1974; Dutton, 1986; Butler et al., 1991). Another trend, which is not in the categorization of Rajagopalan *et al.* (1993), has been the study of individual managerial characteristics and values (Hambrick and Mason, 1984, Gupta and Govindarajan, 1984, Hartman et al., 1989, Hitt and Tyler, 1991, McGuire et al., 2006b, Ginkel and Knippenberg, 2012).

More recently Shepherd and Rudd (2013) conducted another literature review on strategic decision-making process studies, further confirming the four trends that were discussed in the above paragraph. The focus of this review is on the contextual variables that influence the decision-making process. Those include the decision makers' individual factors (e.g. education, demographic diversity, cognitive style, personality), decision-specific factors (e.g. complexity, uncertainty, motive, importance, time pressure), external environment (e.g. stability, high-velocity, competition), and firm characteristics (e.g. power, structure, size).

Simons and Thompson (1998) reported that decision-specific and individual characteristics in combination with environmental and organizational characteristics

are highly relevant to the process of decision-making. Despite the development of previous research, however, few studies have incorporated a range of managerial characteristics; fewer still incorporated both organizational and environmental factors (Friedlaender *et al.*, 1992). A very small number of studies of environmental, organizational, and content factors have included any measure of managerial characteristics into their research. As a consequence, it can be argued that much research has a tendency to dissociate the process of decision-making from the decision maker (Hambrick and Mason, 1984). In order to make this contribution, and to begin to address a deficiency in the literature, this research project seeks to incorporate two of these managerial characteristics and environmental factors in managerial decision-making process: individual versus group decision-making approaches and national culture.

The section below presents a detailed review on the literature of individual and group decision-making styles.

2.4 Decision-making styles: cognition and action

As discussed above, throughout all levels and periods of organizations various kinds of decisions are made, which forms and shapes the organization. The decision-making process is completed by individuals, either acting alone or in groups. However, managers have to decide first if and how to involve other people in the decision-making process. This decision is among the first tasks before the actual decisions are made. The managers will either take an individual approach, a group approach, or a mixture of both.

Decision-making styles and the variables that influence them have been an important area in managerial decision-making research (Darwish, 1998) and have received considerable attention in the literature (e.g. (Badawy, 1980, Muna, 1980, Ali and Swiercz, 1986, Ali, 1989, 1993, Ali and Schaupp, 1992, Kaur, 1993, Ali et al., 1995; Yousef, 1998; Leonard et al, 1999; Brousseau et al, 2006). In addition, the importance of studying individual and group decision-making styles lies in the fact that decisions made by individuals and by groups have different characteristics and outcomes. They follow different formulation processes and carry different implications (Harrison, 1987, Mohammed and Ringseis, 2001, Armstrong et al., 2011, Naqshbandi and Kaur, 2013). As individual decision-makers, managers are influenced by a set of psychological forces that control their behaviour (Thunholm, 2004, Armstrong et al., 2011). As for group decision-making, besides the individual members' psychological states, other aspects also affect its input and outcomes, including group dynamics, leadership style, organizational and national culture (Harrison, 1987, Mohammed and Ringseis, 2001, Kerr and Tindale, 2004, Kugler et al., 2012, Ginkel and Knippenberg, 2012).

Research into decision-making styles, as discussed in the last section above, is mostly concerned with how decision makers make decisions (take action), and why these actions are taken. Decision-making styles have been conceptualised as a “learned response” (Driver et al, 1993), or “habitual pattern” (Scott and Bruce, 1995) through which an individual approached decisions. It is a process that combines two activities: the mental activities (Rowe and Mason, 1987) of information processing, and behavioural actions to make judgements and reach a conclusion (Misra et al, 2013).

Thus the decision-making style involves both an information processing style, often known as cognitive style (Leonard et al, 1999); and a behavioural style, the decision makers' chosen actions to achieve decisions during and after processing information. Therefore to study decision-making styles, one needs to consider the cognitive and behavioural aspects

Cognitive style itself is a multi-disciplinary topic, ranging from neural psychology to business and management (Armstrong, 2011). The concept is related to various aspects of business and management studies, including but not limited to, vocational and occupational issues, teamwork, marketing, management information system, and decision-making (Armstrong, 2011). Consequently it has been studied from various points of views, and has yielded multi-dimensional outcomes. Cognitive style is difficult to conceptually and operationally define (Leonard, 1999). More importantly, recent research strongly indicates that general cognitive variables do not provide additional validity over specific decision-making styles (Dewberry et al, 2013).

The behavioural aspect of decision-making styles, on the other hand, is an observable and measurable construct, which may be used to indirectly infer unconscious or conscious cognitive processes (Leonard, 1999). By following the cognitive process and rationale employed by managers, one can expect to further understand the cognitive side of the decision-making styles (Armstrong, 2011). Therefore, the approach of this research is to examine the behaviour aspect of the decision-making styles, and explore the reasons why managers choose to adopt specific styles to make certain decisions. One of the behavioural aspects of managers' decision-making style is their choice of using individual and / or group decision-making approaches.

Much recent research in decision-making reports that managers can adopt different decision-making styles, depending on the pattern of organization and individual characteristic (Yukl, 1981, Blyton, 1984, Ali, 1989), cultural background (Hofstede, 1980a, Tayeb, 1988, Ali et al., 1995, McGuire et al., 2006b), situations and type of decision involved (Harrison, 1987). Harrison (1987) argues that depending on the factors that form the decision processes of individuals and / or groups, managers tend to employ different styles for making different decisions in different circumstances. He has identified these process factors as: (a) type of problem or task, (b) acceptance of decisions, (c) quality of solutions, (d) characteristics of individuals, (e) decision-making climate (in which national culture is included), and (f) amount of time available. However, factors (b), (c) and (f) could be largely related, or even incorporated into, factor (a) type of problems to solve or decisions to make; that is, the decision-specific factors. Therefore managers' decision-making styles could be influenced by three large categories of factors: (1) decision-specific factors, (2) managerial characteristic factors and (3) environmental factors which include those inside of the organization, that is, organizational factors. One factor that is missing here is the managers' individual cognitive style as a psychological force which influences these decision-making activities and processes (Thunholm, 2004, Armstrong et al., 2011). As part of the decision-making process, these four areas are consistent with the research trends of decision-making process that have been identified in Section 2.3

Decisions making styles and factors influencing them have been an important area in decision-making research. Kaur (1993) argues that the effectiveness of any

organization depends not only on the technological efficiency of the organization, but also to a large extent on the managerial approach to decision-making. Rowe and Boulgarides (1983) suggest that a decision style approach is a useful means of understanding managers, their decision-making, their problem solving, and their ability to interact with others in the organization. As a result, decision styles and the variables influencing them have received considerable attention in the literature (e.g. (Badawy, 1980, Muna, 1980, Ali and Swiercz, 1986, Ali, 1989, 1993, Ali and Schaupp, 1992, Kaur, 1993, Ali et al., 1995).

There has been disagreement among these studies (e.g. Likert, 1967, Heller, 1971, Vroom and Yetton, 1973, Bass and Valenzi, 1974, Muna, 1980, Ali, 1993, Muna, 2003, Muna, 2011) with regard to two main issues: 1) predominant decision-making styles; 2) the variables influencing the adoption of certain decision-making styles. Individual decision-making has the least disagreement across all studies; group decision-making develops from information input, consultation with subordinate, decision-making shared with subordinates, to name just a few. The next section discusses these approaches in details on the research into individual and group decision-making styles. These different approaches in research into decision-making styles provide a theoretical framework for further research.

2.5 Decision-making style and national culture

This section is a review of previous studies of managers' individual or group decision-making styles. The review includes various outcomes in terms of different concepts and categories of the individual and/or group decision-making styles, and

focus on national culture as one of the important contextual variables that influence decision-making styles.

The literature review identifies the following gaps: 1) that there exist varied and overlapping concepts for decision-making styles. This is the rationale for introducing the concept of individual and group decision-making styles for the purpose of this research; 2) the lack of studies of the decision-making styles with managers of the same level. The concepts of different decision styles were developed by studying managers' relationships with subordinates. However managers, even executives, may make decisions with their peers at times; and 3) the cross-cultural investigation of expatriate managers is an area that needs further study (Shepherd & Rudd, 2013).

2.5.1 Decision-making styles: individual, group, or both?

An early and influential decision-making typology was introduced by Lewin, Lippitt and White (1939): “democratic”, “authoritarian” and “Laissez faire”. Authoritarian leaders made nearly all of the decisions themselves; Laissez faire leaders, at the other extreme, allow their subordinates to make all decisions while democratic leaders make joint decisions with their subordinates. In subsequent research other management scholars have proposed different classifications for managerial decision-making styles and the extent of a subordinate's influence and involvement in the decision-making process. For example, March and Simon (1958) proposed a continuum of supervisory styles, with “decisions made by the supervisor and communicated to the worker without prior consultation” at one end; and “decisions made on the basis of free and equal discussion” at the other. Likert (1967) outlined

four systems of management to describe the relationship, involvement, and roles of managers and subordinates in industrial settings: “exploitative authoritative, benevolent authoritative, consultative, and participative group”. Other proposed styles include “direction, negotiation, consultation, participation, and delegation” (Bass and Valenzi, 1974); a set of behavioural descriptors of managers making decisions by themselves, or various degrees of subordinates’ involvement due to the need for information input and problem sharing (Vroom and Yetton, 1973); and the decision behaviour model with a continuum of subordinates’ low and high influence in decision-making (Heller and Yukl, 1969). In order to make this contribution, and to begin to address a deficiency in the literature, this research project proposes an innovative research methodology, cognitive mapping, to explore the managers’ decision-making styles and the factors that influence the managers’ decision-making process.

2.5.2 Cross-cultural research on individual and group decision-making styles

To answer the increasing calls for research into decision-making process in cross-cultural contexts, there has been an “explosion” in the amount of research into leadership and related subjects since the 1990s (Dickson et al., 2003). Many scholars have attempted to address the issue of cross-cultural studies in decision-making styles, and have developed culture-specific tools for measuring individual and group decision-making styles.

Muna (1985, 2003) utilized a power-sharing continuum to define and measure the decision-making styles of Arab executives. Based on the dynamics of power of

influence between the executives and their subordinates, four decision-making styles were categorised in this study: Own decision (style 1), Consultation (style 2), Joint decision (style 3) and Delegation (style 4). For style 1 the manager usually makes his/her own decisions but later provide explanation for making these decisions; style 2 the managers usually consult with his/her subordinates before making decisions but their opinion may or may not influence the decisions; style 3 the managers usually meet with subordinates for important decisions, invite discussion and accept the majority of the points of views of the discussion; and style 4, the manager usually delegate his/her subordinates to make decisions and holds them accountable for the outcome of these decisions.

Ali and Swiercz (1985) developed additional concepts of managers' individual or group decision-making styles with data collected from managers in Saudi Arabia. The categorisation of the managers' decision-making styles was developed in a similar manner, with questions to the managers in relation to their "subordinates". Five styles were identified in this study: autocratic, pseudo-consultative, consultative, participative, and delegation; and a sixth style was later developed as pseudo-participative (Ali, 1993). Of these six styles, pseudo-consultative and pseudo-participative were new styles specifically identified in the Arab culture of authoritarian and hierarchical structures.

2.5.3 Varied categorisation of individual and group decision-making styles

This literature reveals two gaps in the study of individual and group decision-making: one, the categorisation developed in these studies focusses on the decision-making

styles of “leaders” and their relationship with their “subordinates”. It contributes to the study of leadership decision-making styles, but misses the managers' decision-making activities with their peers (Hinckley, 1986) when it comes to the study of managerial decision-making. Therefore, this research is designed to address the omission by investigating managers' decision-making styles with both their subordinates and their peers.

The second issue is the varied, sometimes contradictory and overlapping concepts and categorisation of the decision-making styles from all these studies. There is general agreement that managers use various forms of decision-making styles, with different levels of involvement from others. However, that seems to be the only agreement in these studies. The conceptual terminology appears to be repetitive, overlapping, and over simplified on occasion. Some terms such as consultation or participation are self-explanatory, while others are not.

The reason seems to be that researchers use particular and subtly different contextual factors as datum to develop and label the concepts of decision-making styles. For example, the decision-making style of “consultation” and similar concepts of “consultative” or “pseudo-consultative” implies that consulting for information or agreement from colleagues is the factor for managers to choose whether or not to make decisions with others. In other categories power dynamics between the managers and their subordinates was a factor used to differentiate decision-making styles, such as the power sharing continuum (Muna, 2011). Problem sharing (Vroom and Yetton, 1973) and national culture (Ali, 1989, Ali, 1993) factors are also used in a similar fashion. For example, the concepts of pseudo-consultative and pseudo-

participative are specific decision styles developed from the data in Arab countries (Ali, 1989, Ali, 1993).

Table 1 below summarises the discussion above on the different decision-making styles and their underlying factors. It is clear that there is much disagreement on decision-making styles and how they are conceptualised. The major underlying factors are implementation-related (Nutt, 2014) variables, include power sharing, subordinates influence, information input, and problem and risk sharing.

Table 1: Summary of prior major studies on decision-making styles

Research	Decision styles	Underlying factors
(March and Simon, 1958)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made by the supervisor and communicated to the worker without prior consultation to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Decisions made on the basis of free and equal discussion 	Supervisory styles Subordinate's influence
(Likert, 1967)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exploitative authoritative (individual) Benevolent authoritative (individual) Consultative (individual or group) Participative (group) 	Authority Power sharing
(Vroom and Yetton, 1973)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Manager makes decision him/herself Manager makes decision obtaining necessary information from subordinate Manager shares problem with subordinates; makes own decision Manager and subordinate together arrive at a mutually agreeable decision Delegation of decision to subordinate 	Information input Agreement from subordinates Problem sharing
(Heller and Yukl, 1971)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Own decision without detailed explanation 	Subordinate influence

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Prior consultation with subordinates • Joint decision-making with subordinates • Delegation of decisions to subordinates 	
(Ali and Swiercz, 1985) (Ali, 1993)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Autocratic (individual) • Pseudo-consultative (individual) • Consultative (individual or group) • Pseudo-participative (individual or group) • Participative (group) • Delegation (group) 	Information input National culture
(Muna, 1985) (Muna, 2011)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Own decision • Consultation (individual or group) • Joint decision (group) • Delegation (group) 	Power sharing

The above table shows that the research disagrees on the various decision-making styles adopted by managers, as well as the factors that influenced the different decision-making styles. The theoretical constructs are overlapping, and limited factors were observed in the prior studies. Therefore in this research two clear concepts of individual and group decision-making style is used in reflecting on the point from an earlier discussion in section 2.4 on the two aspects of decision-making styles: cognition and action; individual and group decision-making styles are observable actions that the managers take, and the cognitive reasoning of choosing the styles can help to understand the decision-making process from the managers' perspective. Therefore in this research the decision-making styles are from two observable actions of the managers: individual decision-making style, and group decision-making styles. The contextual factors associated with each style are explored using cognitive mapping.

In Table 1, the factors that contribute to a manager's decision-making style can be summarised to be related to their control of power (relationship with and involvement of subordinates), communication of information (problem sharing), and national culture. The concept of "power" refers to the manager's exercise of control in management, in terms of whether or not to give more autonomy to the people who work for or with them (Malone, 2013). Individual decision-making styles is associated with factors when 1) managers retain power and limit a subordinate's influence in making decisions; and 2) there is less need for additional information input from and problem sharing with subordinates. Group decision-making style, on the other hand, is associated with the opposite situation: a higher level of power sharing and more influence from subordinates; and more information input and sharing.

National culture has been identified as one of the factors that influence managers' decision-making styles. Some previous constructs of decision styles are developed with a specific local culture context, for example, e.g. pseudo-consultative and pseudo-participative in Saudi Arabia (Ali and Swiercz, 1985, Ali, 1993). It was also suggested that national culture is one of the explanations as to why different researcher developed varied decision-making styles (Darwish, 1998). Many scholars have also found that national culture is one of the variables that influence managers' decision-making styles (e.g. Tayeb, 1995, Ali, 1989, Liberman and Boehe, 2011)). Therefore national culture not only influences the managers' decision-making styles, it is one of the drivers for the various categorisations of decision-making styles.

The discussion above exhibits a limited number of factors that contribute to decision-making styles. However, literature discussed in section 2.2 and 2.3 indicates that there are much more factors could influence managers' decision-making styles. Further exploration of those factors could advance our understanding on managers' decision-making styles. This research is to explore these factors using cognitive mapping and interpretation methodology.

The next section provides a detailed review of national cultural studies and discusses recent developments in cross-cultural studies.

2.5.4 Cultural studies and National culture: culture and national boundaries

Studying the interaction between national culture and management practice raises complex issues. The meaning of words which are usually taken for granted, such as “culture” and “nation” is often vague, ambiguous and contested. One needs to establish that national culture is a viable concept for cross-cultural research.

The notion of culture is a woolly concept. The definition can vary from the very inclusive “complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society” (Tylor, 1920 [1871]); to highly focused definitions such as “a shared meaning system” (Shweder and Levine, 1984). The Oxford English Dictionary defines culture as “The ideas, customs, and social behaviour of a particular people or society” and “The attitudes and behaviour characteristic of a particular social group”. Some scholars argue that culture is something a group of people “has” while others assert that it is

something people “are”; some define culture as “what it is” while others explain it in terms of “what it is not” (Tayeb, 2003). The text below provides a few examples of the definitions from social scientists and management scholars which demonstrate the complexity of the concept.

Table 2 below provides some examples of different definition of culture.

Table 2: some definition of culture

Definitions	Citations
“Culture consists of patterns, explicit and implicit, of and for behaviour acquired and transmitted by symbol, consisting the distinctive achievements of human groups, including their embodiment in artefacts; the essential core of culture consists of traditional (i.e. historically derived and selected) ideas and especially their attached value;”	Kroeber & Kluckhohn, 1952; cited by (Adler, 1997)
“Culture is not genetically inherited, and cannot exist on its own, but is always shared by members of a society.”	(Hall, 1976)
“(Culture) is the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from another.”	(Hofstede, 1993)
“Culture consists of the derivatives of experience, more or less organized, learned or created by the individuals of a population, including those images or encodements and their interpretations (meanings) transmitted from past generations, from contemporaries, or formed by individuals themselves.”	(Schwartz, 1999)

“(Culture is) shared motives, values, beliefs, identities, and interpretations of meanings of significant events that result from common experiences of members of collectives and are transmitted across age generations.”	(Javidan and House, 2001)
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The above table indicates that despite the different definitions, culture is created, inherited and shared by a group or category of people, or a society. It is shaped by historical events and the shared experience of the people. The concept is useful in demonstrating that the two cultures – Chinese and French – in this study are significantly different. This will be discussed in section 2.6 in this chapter.

The word “national culture” implies that the nation is the body of people or society that share a culture, and that cultural boundaries coincide with national boundaries. In cross-cultural research, there has been the question – is investigation of nation-based culture a meaningful concept in management studies?

Common wisdom indicates that in general, culture varies between nations, but using the nation as the unit of analysis in cross-cultural research has been a controversial approach. Some scholars defend the approach because culture is shaped by historical, geographical and philosophical factors; as each country has a different history, geography and philosophy, so they have a different culture (Tayeb, 2003). Or considering the nation as “a key unit of shared experience” and how its educational and cultural institutions shape the elements of culture (Inglehart and Baker, 2000). Furthermore, nation-states not only influence working attitudes and behaviour at the macro level, but more importantly, they act as a very powerful force in international

business and management practice. National culture is a key factor that affects “economic development, demographic behaviour and general business policies” (Parker, 1997).

Other scholars have expressed more cautious views, or challenge the meaningfulness of the concept of national culture. National culture may not be adequate to define national boundaries because many nations have a large subculture (House and Javidan, 2004, Tung, 2008), and some nations had disintegrated, for example Yugoslavia (Boyacigiller et al., 2007). Moreover, the concept is challenged by Baskerville (2003) with an *Encyclopaedia of World Cultures*, in which the Middle East is said to have 14 nations and 35 different cultures.

Despite the critical opinions, historical, geographical, philosophical and institutional views of culture do find that national boundaries coincide with cultural ones in most parts of the world. Moreover, the economic and political views reinforced the nation as a specified unit in international business activities. In this respect, there is a continuous need for studies that focus on nation-based culture and an understanding of variation at the national level (Minkov and Hofsted, 2012). It is acknowledged that there are a few exceptions to nation-culture correlation, and that there may be significant cultural diversity within some countries and some similarities across national borders. However, recent research (Minkov and Hofstede, 2012) found that cross-border intermixtures are relatively rare.

The few exceptions to the assumption that cultural boundaries coincide with national boundaries has raised interest in research that is outside the scope of the present study.

However, the discussion can inform the design of the methodology in the present investigation, in terms of selection of home and host national cultures of the participants of expatriates.

The literature above indicates that national culture is a meaningful concept, with just a few commentators arguing that cultural boundaries do not coincide with national boundaries ((House and Javidan, 2004, Tung, 2008)). The two national cultures involved in this research therefore avoid these exceptions. The next and bigger question is, how does one investigate and measure culture in cross-cultural studies?

2.5.5 Constructs of National Culture

The term “culture” could refer to a complex set of constructs around which there is ongoing debate in cross-cultural management studies. This section first presents briefly some major studies on national culture, and then brings out the latest developments and arguments in national culture and cross-cultural studies.

Although national culture is influential, it is not the whole explanation for organizational structures and managerial attitudes and behaviours. The influence of differences across nations on managers’ behaviours cannot be denied (Tayeb, 2003). National culture has been shown definitively to influence the attitudes and behaviours of managers (e.g. Liberman and Boehe, 2011, Hall, 1976, Bournois and Metcalfe, 1991, Adler and Bartholomew, 1992, Hickson, 1993, Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1995, Clark and Mallory, 1996, Waldman et al., 2006, Harris and Carr, 2008, Dimitratos et al., 2011a). Other researchers (e.g. Nutt, 2014, Bhagat and McQuaid, 1982, Miller,

1984, Redding, 1994, McGuire et al., 2006a) also argue that developing and testing culturally relevant operational measures of work-related attitudes enhance our understanding of management thinking and practices across nations.

Most cultural researchers have based their research on trying to identify the values and attitudes that make up culture and which can be distinguished between one nation and another, and on identifying different components or dimensions of national culture. Value has been defined as the invisible part of culture manifested through cultural practices, consisting of symbols, heroes and rituals (Hofstede, 2001b). It is argued that cultural values drive practices (Hofstede, 2001b, Javidan et al., 2006).

The well-known anthropologist Edward T. Hall (1976) has carried out many studies using the analytical approach. He focuses primarily on the communication pattern found within cultures and emphasises three dimensions for comparing societies: context, space, and time. Context refers to a culture's tendency to use high-context messages or low-context messages in routine communication. He emphasised the importance of orientation towards time and space in human interactions. The concepts are neatly developed, and they hold promise for distinguishing between cultures. These concepts are based on qualitative insights, and it is possible to see aspects of both high and low context cultures in all countries. However, Hall does not attempt to locate countries on high-low context scales. Nevertheless, the model does provide insights into the values that determine how a range of management functions are performed across countries.

Unlike Hall, Hofstede (1980a) makes a distinction between values and culture, and demonstrates that work-related values are not universal. Based on extensive quantitative data, four dimensions are identified for variations across nations: individualism/collectivism, power distance, uncertainty avoidance, and masculinity / femininity. Individualism is defined as “a loosely knit social framework in which people are supposed to take care of themselves and of their immediate families only”; while collectivism “is characterized by a tight social framework in which people distinguish between in groups and outgroups, they expect their in-group to look after them, and in exchange for that they feel they owe absolute loyalty to it” (Hofstede, 1980b). Power distance is defined as “the extent to which a society accepts the fact that power in institutions and organizations is distributed unequally” (Hofstede, 1980b). The third dimension, uncertainty avoidance is defined as “*the extent to which a society feels threatened by uncertain and ambiguous situations and tries to avoid these situations by providing greater career stability, establishing more formal rules, not tolerating deviant ideas and behaviours, and believing in absolute truths and the attainment of expertise*” (Hofstede, 1980b). In the fourth dimension masculinity was defined as “the extent to which the dominant values in society are ‘masculine’ - that is, assertiveness, the acquisition of money and things, and not caring for others, the quality of life, or people” (Hofstede, 1980b); and femininity was defined as the opposite.

In the later studies (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) a fifth dimension is identified as Confucian dynamism, or long-term versus short-term orientation. Long-term orientation refers to past- and present-oriented values such as respect for tradition and fulfilling social obligations.

These studies develop one of the best-known cultural dimensions, but have also attracted many critics. For example, Sondergaard (1994) points out that the effect of organizational culture was apparently ignored; Jaeger (1983) and Tayeb (1988) both argue that the analysis in Hofstede's study is compressed and simplified; Pugh (1995) on the other hand, argues that Hofstede overcomplicates his cultural map: individualism and power distance is basically one dimension with only a few exceptions. However, as Mead (1998) has claimed, the criticisms levelled at Hofstede's study are dwarfed by the strength of his work in comparing cultures and applying cultural analysis to practical management problems. The dimensions tap into deep cultural values and allow comparisons to be made across national cultures. Kirkman and colleagues (2006) reviewed empirical studies utilising Hofstede's framework and concluded that the findings are "broad and impactful". However, they did emphasise the need for research to improve the use of the framework and look beyond this paradigm.

Laurent's study (1983, 1986) explores the cultural influence on a manager's view of the organisation's role, function and operation. He identifies four dimensions for exploring a structure of collective managerial ideologies that differentiates national culture: organisation as a political system, authority systems, role formulation systems, and hierarchy relationship systems. The studies raise questions about the universality of management and organisational knowledge and practice, and they show the importance of understanding social and cultural aspects of a society. However, the data is collected from a limited set of countries, and the results only contrast the management styles in Latin countries, Northern Europe and North America.

Trompenaars (1994), like Hofstede, based his cultural model upon extensive quantitative data. He developed seven dimensions against which countries can be measured: universalism versus particularism (importance of rules or relationships), collectivism versus individualism (a function of groups or individuals), neutral versus emotional (display of emotions), diffuse versus specific (separation of work and personal life), achievement versus ascription (status is achieved or given), sequential versus synchronic (do a single or several things at one time), and inner directed vs. outer directed (people control or controlled by environment). Trompenaars adopted a pragmatic approach, providing advice for managers working in unfamiliar cultures. The significant advantage of his study is that it draws together what is derived from his questionnaire, and ideas contributed by earlier cultural theorists. However, in some ways his research is also problematic: it lacks the focus and clarity of Hofstede (Mead, 1998); informants are vaguely defined and lack homogeneity; and some parameters come from limited source countries, or from other writers' work instead of quantitative or qualitative data.

The Global Leadership and Organisational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) project (House and Javidan, 2004) is one of the major and large-scale cross-cultural research projects in recent decades. It was a multi-phase, multi-method project investigating the interrelationship between societal culture, organisational culture, leadership and societal achievements. The project involved over 160 researchers and 17,000 participants from 62 countries. The project is designed to achieve three major goals: the first of which was to develop cultural dimensions at societal and organisational levels analysis. The second major goal of the project was to investigate the beliefs of

effective leadership in different cultures. The third one was ethnographic investigation of individual countries with qualitative data. The first goal is most relevant to the present research. Nine dimensions of culture have been identified: Performance orientation; Assertiveness orientation; Future orientation; Humane orientation; Collectivism I: Institutional collectivism; Collectivism II; In-group collectivism; Gender egalitarianism; Power distance; and Uncertainty avoidance. These concepts are defined as:

“Performance orientation refers to the extent to which an organization or society encourages and rewards group members for performance improvement and excellence.

Assertiveness orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in social relationships.

Future orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies engage in future-oriented behaviours such as planning, investing in the future, and delaying gratification.

Humane orientation is the degree to which individuals in organizations or societies encourage and reward individuals for being fair, altruistic, friendly, generous, caring, and kind to others.

Collectivism I: Institutional collectivism reflects the degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action.

Collectivism II: In-group collectivism reflects the degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty and cohesiveness in their organizations or families.

Gender egalitarianism is the extent to which an organization or a society minimizes gender role differences and gender discrimination.

Power distance is defined as the degree to which members of an organization or society expect and agree that power should be unequally shared.

Uncertainty avoidance is defined as the extent to which members of an organization or society strive to avoid uncertainty by reliance on social norms, rituals, and bureaucratic practices to alleviate the unpredictability of future events.”

(Javidan and Dastmalchian, 2009)

A series of reviews and debates between Hofstede (Hofstede, 2006, Hofstede, 2010) and the GLOBE team (Javidan et al., 2006) have sparked inspiration, on-going arguments and cleared up some previously controversial points in cultural and cross-

cultural areas. One of the key discussions is what has been measured using different dimensions, and what should be measured in studying culture.

As discussed earlier in this section, value is considered an invisible component of culture that drives behaviour differently from one society to another. It is widely accepted that the value-based framework for measuring cultures has been helpful in deciphering cultures (Leung et al., 2002, Leung et al., 2005, Smith et al., 2002). One of the major contributions of Hofstede's work is based on the realisation that by aggregating individual data to a national level, one could obtain representative opinions of values. These values and opinions were widely shared by the group of people from each nation that he had surveyed. This suggests that national culture may be operationalised by aggregating the self-reported responses from individuals from across a number of different nations. Subsequent investigation in cultural studies seems to accept this notion, with majority of them focusing on value (Schwartz, 1992, Inglehart and Baker, 2000, Smith et al., 1996); and extended to beliefs (Bond, 2004), and shared sources of guidance (Smith et al., 2002). The challenge is that before making such aggregations, a set of data must be examined to determine whether cross-national variation does actually exceed intra-national variability to a sufficient extent.

The GLOBE team shares the assumption of Hofstede, that it is useful to aggregate the data, but questioned if the self-reported value is sufficient to characterise culture. The researchers therefore distinguished between value "as is" (practice) and value "as it should be" (value). The nine dimensions were developed based on the responders perception of what value should be (Smith, 2006).

The analysis of GLOBE's work by Smith (2006) and Minkov and Balgoev (2011) has further developed theories in cultural study. They concluded that what the respondents consider important to themselves is different from what they think others should or should not do. The answers to the former are usually labelled personal values, and the latter referred to socially desirable behaviours. The significance of this finding is that it has clearly exposed a difference between personal values and socially desirable values for the first time. For example, if one considers power is important to oneself, one may not desire others to think that power is important.

Further analysis of other large international databases by Minkov (2007) contributes to a new dimension to Hofstede's culture theory: indulgence versus restraints. He finds that a cultural dimension identified by Inglehart and Baker (Inglehart and Baker, 2000), called "*survival versus self-expression values*" could be split into two components. The first one sits with Hofstede's individualism versus collectivism dimension; the second one was defined by happiness and its closest correlations, a perception of life control and importance of leisure in one's life, which have been identified as the best predictors of happiness across more than 90 nations (Minkov 2009). These three variables were combined to form a new (sixth) dimension in the third edition of *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Hofstede et al, 2010): indulgence versus restraint. This dimension refers to hedonistic desires and their manifestation. Western cultures tend to be more indulgent in that respect, whereas most Asian countries prefer to hide or control these impulses.

The key argument here seems to be, what is the “best” way of constructing dimensions, and the “preferred” way to measure culture? There is no easy answer to this question. Hofstede has stated that culture, like its dimensions, are constructs that only exist in the minds of people.

“Dimensions should not be reified. They do not ‘exist’ in a tangible sense. They are constructs, ‘not directly accessible to observation but inferable from verbal statements and other behaviors and useful in predicting still other observable and measurable verbal and nonverbal behavior, (Levitin, 1973: 492). If they exist, it is in our mind – we have defined them into existence. They are supposed to help us in understanding and handling the complex reality of our social world. If they cannot do this, they are redundant”.

(Hofstede, 2010)

The purpose of conceptualising culture is to help us make sense of the social world and operationalise research concepts. A more recent review (Minkov and Hofstede, 2011) argues that there is no best way to construct cultural dimensions; that depending on the purpose of the research, different models will have different merits. It is important to recognise the importance of nation-level analysis of cultural effects, and to use appropriate dimensions to answer different questions.

In relation to the present research, the cultural dimensions are the guidelines for selecting samples of home and host national cultures of the participants. The aim is to select two cultures that clearly differentiate from each other.

2.5.5 Linkage of individuals to national culture

Culture is both an individual construct and a social construct. “to some extent, culture exists in each and every one of us individually as much as it exists as a global, social construct” (Matsumoto, 1996). Cultural scholars have used aggregated individual level data of values and beliefs to construct the dimensions at national level. Theoretically if one acts in accordance with those values and behaviour, then one belongs to that culture.

Based on the definition of culture, it is created, learned and shared among a group of people. It is “a derivative of individual experience, something learned or created by individual themselves or passed on to them socially by contemporaries or ancestors” (Avruch, 1998). Culture can be learned in different ways. It “is learned from the people you interact with as you are socialized”, and “[it] is also taught by the explanations people received from the natural and human events around them” (Lustig and Koester, 1999). Therefore one’s early life experience and education can be the major source to inherit or form one’s culture.

Hofstede’s research (Hofstede et al., 1990) on national culture supports these claims. The values they measured were inferred from indirect questions and could be unconscious. These were mostly of the kind acquired in childhood, and unlikely to change much after that. These theoretical discussions provide guidelines for methodological design in terms of the selection of participants.

The concept of national culture has been established in the above discussion as a viable construct for management research. Now it is time to review the cross-cultural studies on managers' individual and group decision-making styles, to bring the conceptual framework together.

2.5.6 Cross-cultural study on managers individual and group decision-making styles

Early research on decision-making styles had remained predominately rooted in single nation studies (Axelsson *et al.*, 1991). More research has been done in recent years, but the number of studies and depth does not keep up with the development of cross-cultural studies. This section provides a review of cross-cultural studies about managers' styles for individual or group decision-making. It includes the research using the decision-making styles that have been discussed in Section 3.1.

Outputs from the earlier studies in decision-making styles have been used for various studies later into decision-making styles. Many of these studies were investigations in Western countries. For example, Russ (2011) examined the X/Y theory assumption as predictors for Vroom-Yetton's concept of participative decision-making. X/Y theory refers to two particular views of work, management and organizational life. Theory X managers typically assume that employees possess unfavourable opinions about work; and theory Y managers typically assume that employees have an instinctual motivation to perform. This study concludes that there is a high correlation between the assumptions of X/Y theory and managers engaging in participative decision-making styles with employees. The data was collected from industries across the United States. A study of British managers' attitude towards decision-making

suggested that intellectual stimulation is positively and significantly related to delegative style. Intellectual stimulation refers to the characteristics of creative organisations that have confidence in the abilities of its workforce. Other studies focus on cross-cultural investigations.

Other researchers explored a set of influential factors to predict a manager's choice of decision-making style in an international cultural context, focusing on non-western context. A number of cross-cultural studies have confirmed the important role of national culture in the managers' individual and group decision-making styles. Ali and collaborators found that individualism and collectivism, one of the cultural value dimensions developed by Hofstede (Hofstede, 1980a, Hofstede, 2001a) are relevant to managers decision-making styles. They found a high tendency towards collectivism and a weak commitment to individualism; and a strong preference for consultative and participative decision styles among Kuwaiti managers (Ali et al., 1997); and in Saudi Arabia managers' attitude toward risk and individualism is closely correlated (Ali, 1993).

Darwish (1998) investigated a set of variables as predictors of decision-making styles in the United Arab Emirates. The outcome suggests that organisational culture and level of technology used in the organisation have a significant impact on managers' choice of decision-making styles in a multicultural workforce. Work satisfaction was another variable that was found to influence managers' decision-making styles in Saudi Arabia (Ali and Swiercz, 1985). Muna (2003) developed the decision styles continuum of power sharing as a tool for managers working in the Arab world. And

Hammoud (2011) proposed a characterisation of Arab corporate culture in relation to consultative authority decision-making.

The majority of cross-cultural comparative studies are concerned with cultures in parallel in investigating decision-making styles. For example, a comparative study was conducted by Ali and collaborators. The focus was to compare decision-making style between two cultural groups: Americans and Arabs. In this study American participants scored higher than their Arab counterparts on individualism but less on collectivism measures. Participants in both groups displayed a strong preference for consultative and participative styles, and deemed them to be the most effective in practice (Ali et al., 2005). The preference has different cultural and social imperative roots: desire for democracy in work place in America, and traditionally sanctioned consultation in Arab world.

Some cross-cultural comparative studies focus on specific styles of the managers' decision-making. For example, Liberman and Boehe (2011) examined data from 47 countries and concluded that in countries where managers perceive that the labour quality is lower, the managerial willingness to delegate the power of decision-making decreases. It was found in other research (Chevier and Viegas-Pires, 2013) that managers expectation in delegation were different among French and Madagascan managers.

A limited number of studies have investigated inter-cultural behaviour of expatriate managers in relation to decision-making styles. A study (Ali et al., 1995) into expatriates in United Arab Emirates confirmed that different values of expatriate

managers from those of indigenous managers, have an impact on their decision-making styles preference. The authors emphasised the importance of developing and testing decision-making style constructs that are relevant culturally. Another study (Muna, 2011) investigated Lebanese executives working in their home country, GCC (the Gulf Cooperation Council) countries, and in the United States. The research found that although these managers are all born and raised in Lebanon and share the values obtained from childhood, their decision-making styles differ significantly when working with multicultural and diverse subordinates. It was suggested that future cross-cultural research on decision-making is much needed with non-western constructs and context.

The above review indicates that the cross-cultural research on decision-making styles is limited in certain cultures, although the literature on specific styles is more diversified in cultural context. The culturally relevant constructs of decision-making styles (e.g. (Ali, 1993, Muna, 2003) were used to conduct cross-cultural investigation in relevant cultural context. The individual and group decision-making styles in the present study could potentially be a more robust construct in studies involving different cultures. As discussed at the beginning of this section, individual and group decision-making are observable management behaviours. The key is to explore what variables are associated with each style in a cross-cultural context.

Although as a single explanation, national culture is insufficient as explanations for organizational structures and managerial attitudes and behaviours, the influence of differences across nations on managers' behaviours cannot be denied (Tayeb, 2003). National culture has been shown to influence the attitudes and behaviours of

managers (e.g. (Hall, 1976, Bournois and Metcalfe, 1991, Adler and Bartholomew, 1992, Hickson, 1993, Sparrow and Hiltrop, 1995, Clark and Mallory, 1996, Harris and Carr, 2008, Dimitratos et al., 2011b). Other researchers (e.g. (Bhagat and McQuaid, 1982, Miller, 1984, McGuire et al., 2006b) also argue that developing and testing culturally relative operational measures of work-related attitudes enhance our understanding of management thinking and practices across nations.

Owing to the diversity and complexity of the conceptual, theoretical, methodological and practical issues in cultural research, a large amount of literature produces diversified, contradictory, and confusing conclusions on cultural comparative management research. In the continuous critical reviews of the cross-cultural literature (Schollhammer, 1969, Roberts, 1970, Adler, 1983, Redding, 1994, Cray and Mallory, 1998, Yaprak, 2008) there has been a persistent theme of lacking coherent theories both in middle ground and higher levels. Redding (1994) for example, concluded that a large amount of cross-national comparative research had been positivist, descriptive and concerned with facts. Cray and Mallory (1998) underline the weakness of linkage between national culture and individual behaviours. The importance of the linkage is not only concerned with the process from aggregated individual behaviour to compiled national characterization, but also on the reverse process of application from national characteristics to individual behaviours, which is of utmost interest for both researchers and managers working in an international environment. All these reviews not only provide a comprehensive overview of what is going on with the cross-cultural comparative research from different perspectives, but also address the complex nature of the cross-cultural research, its existing problems, as well as suggestions to future research directions and designs. Besides focusing on

the questions of “when” and “where”, more research needed to be done on “how” culture influence behaviours. Since the 1990’s, cultural research into business and management is enriched with increasing sophistication, for example, to include deeper analysis of the content and structure values and viewed through anthropological lenses (Yaprak, 2008).

There have been suggestions about how to improve cross-cultural research, either to be more rigorous and inventive in research designs; or via a reorientation of both research foci and methodologies. Redding (1994) suggested, for example, reorientation of research direction to include more ethno-science or interpretative work, and a move from idiographic micro theory to more mid-range or high-level theories. Cray and Mallory (1998) suggest a cognitive approach to cross-cultural management, which attempts to find the links between national culture and individual behaviours. Other researchers (e.g. (Adler et al., 1986, Redding, 1994) also made the similar suggestions that cross-cultural research could benefit largely from studies considering the impact of the cognitive aspects of culture on management performance. Two more themes emerge from this suggestion of reorientation: intercultural interaction and a multiple culture perspective. Intercultural interaction research focuses on interaction in addition to comparison, of managers from different cultures working in specific organizational and institutional context; while multiple cultures perspective extends the focus of cross-cultural interaction beyond national differences (Boyacigiller, 1996). Furthermore, suggestions are made to develop more comprehensive methods to understand the diversity, dynamic nature and complexity of cultural management studies (Yaprak, 2008).

In this research, a cognitive mapping methodology is used to explore the cognitive aspect of the managers' decision-making styles. Cognitive mapping is suggested as an innovative methodology to organise and analyse the data, and understand the impact of cognitive aspects of the decision-making process.

2.6 Summary of methodology issues

As discussed in section 2.2 and 2.3, four general aspects have been identified as being important for understanding the nature of managerial decision-making processes, namely environmental, organizational, decision-specific, and individual factors. Despite the development of previous research, however, few studies have incorporated a range of managerial characteristics with both organizational and environmental factors. A very small number of studies of environmental, organizational, and content factors have included any measure of managerial characteristics into their research. This research project seeks to incorporate two of these managerial characteristics and environmental factors in managerial decision-making process: individual / group decision-making and national culture.

Research suggests that a decision-making style approach is a useful means of understanding managers, their decision-making, their problem solving, and their ability to interact with others in the organization. Managers' individual and / or group decision-making orientation is also influenced by three large categories of factors: decision-specific, managerial characteristic and environmental factors. Although decision-making styles and factors influencing them have been an important topic in decision-making research, few researchers have explored the extent to which

managers' national culture background influence the individual and / or group decision-making orientation in comparison with other factors.

National culture, as one of the more influential factors in the decision-making process, is not a single variable itself in the international business context. It consists in both managers' national culture background and the national cultural context in which the managers work. Both factors are involved in the dynamic of international managerial decision-making performance. Given the identified gaps in decision-making and decision-making styles literature, the more precise topics in this research therefore, is the managers' national culture background to their adaptation of individual and / or group decision-making in a different national culture context of working. The inquiry examines the intercultural interactions of managers from one culture background in another different cultural context, more precisely, managers' communication in their decision-making process under the circumstance that two different national cultures meet in the working place.

Many researchers have questioned the adoption of nation-culture as the logical unit for analysis. It is true that nation and culture do not always coincide with each other, however, the majority of the nations have distinguish cultural variation from other part of the world. Despite the complexity of the issue and disagreement in the dimensions and outcomes amongst culture researchers, it is clear that there are different levels of cultural varieties between nations. The two cultures chosen for this research will be justified against the findings in Section 2.3, with distinguishing characteristics and differences from each other: Chinese and French.

The participants in this study are expatriate French managers working in China. The reason of selection is discussed in the literature review. The two countries' specific cultural dimensions are discussed to show the distinctive characteristics of the two cultures.

CHINA

With a history dating back to between 2500 and 2000 B.C., Chinese culture first flourished from an ancient origin in what is now the central and north part of China., After centuries of development, it has resulted in a distinctive system of writing, philosophy, art and political organisation recognisable as Chinese civilization.

Independent historians have identified some salient and consistent traits of Chinese history and culture. One of them is the capacity of the Chinese to absorb the people of surrounding areas into their own civilization. Throughout the history there were two dynasties established by what were considered alien people at the time: the Yuan Dynasty from Mongolia in the thirteenth century and the Qing Dynasty from Manchuria in the mid-seventeenth century. However, the consistency of social, economic and political systems has continued especially when the emperors tried to strengthen their ruling power. This is a unique characteristic in world history, that there is continuity in culture across 4,000 years to the present time. Foreign / western influence from mid-nineteenth century brought some changes to the country but fundamentally the values and beliefs remained virtually unchanged.

Since the first unified Dynasty, the sedentary Chinese have faced a constant threat to the safety and way of life from non-Chinese who dwelt at the time on the margins of the northern borders. Before the mid-nineteenth century China had been self-sufficient and surrounded by less developed neighbours. These circumstances have conditioned the Chinese view of themselves versus other people: insiders – us and outsiders – them. It is very difficult to surmount this obstacle; there are cultural lines that are virtually impossible to cross.

Research (Wong and Kong, 2014) shows that managers in China have some key features in terms of their management style.

- Flexibility in their principles
- Establishing, nurturing and using “guanxi” to get things done
- Keeping “face” and “giving” “face”
- Avoiding conflict superficially

FRANCE

France, like most European countries, has been subject to the distractions of foreign adventures: from earlier Gallo-Roman civilization following the Roman conquest of Celtic Gaul before the fifth century; sweeping invasions from the east during fifth to ninth century; to later the “Hundred Year War” and colonial conflict with England; and wars with Germany in the First and Second World War. Its unique culture imprint with other blended influence across the West. The root of its civilization is deep in the European Continent, which gives a context of, if not similarity, but a familiarization with other cultures in the region.

Unlike the political pattern of dynasty in Chinese history, i.e. one following another in a cycle of ascent, achievement, decay, and rebirth under a new family; the changes in France are more novel and innovative. The current of times have brought the dynasties, revolutions and struggles between monarchy and republics, colonial expansion, up to the present state of France. It has a distinguished culture, but the barriers between insiders and outsiders are not so dramatically insurmountable.

The most distinctive feature of French managers is the implicit set of roles associated with a job title and what is expected to be done in fulfilling this job (D'Iribarne, 2009). "When the French are asked about their work, they continuously refer to what seems the "normal" thing to do according to the customs of their "métier". Another important feature is that French managers consider decision-making a matter of personal choice for which individuals should take responsibility (Chevier and Viegas-Pires, 2013).

The various definitions of culture discussed in section 2.5.4 indicates that despite the difference on definition, culture is created, inherited and shared by a group of people, and it is shaped by historical events and the experiences of the people. The distinctive history of China and France discussed above shaped the different cultures in these two countries.

The literature in cultural studies also helps justify the choice of national cultures in this study. The cultural studies discussed in Section 4 have demonstrated both differences and similarities between these two cultures in various dimensions. Hall's

(1976) concept of context in communication, for example, indicates that though China and France can be labelled as high context cultures, there is significant difference in the size of the required context. Studies of both Hofstede (1980a, 1988) and Trompenaars (1994) demonstrate the difference in various dimensions between China and France. Table 3 below summarises the different scores of China and France in Hofstede's studies (Hofstede, 1980, 1988).

Table 3 Hofstede cultural scores on China and France

	Power distance	Individualism	Masculinity	Uncertainty Avoidance	Long-term orientation	Indulgence
China	80	20	66	30	87	24
France	68	71	43	86	63	48

As shown, the difference between Chinese and French culture is obvious, especially on the individualism and uncertainty avoidance.

As discussed in Section 2.5, many researchers have suggested a reorientation of research foci and methodologies in cross-cultural studies. As a discipline in social science, organizational behaviour theory targets its aim to understand organizational participants' behaviours, normally by studies not much of facts but of meanings. To study meaning one may begin to ask question of how organizational participants make sense of their social world. This is an approach that has been considered a critical development on organizational studies – interpretive. The assumption is that reality is not only socially constructed but also multiple: that the reality cannot be fragmented into independent variables which enable direct cause-and-effect relationship; that it is in a dynamic process of reality shaping interactively and simultaneously. Moreover, the researcher also takes part in reality shaping since the relationship with participants

is interactively influencing each other. The purpose is to discover the shared cultural knowledge, both tacit and explicit, that reflects the way members of a culture make sense of their social setting. The methodology for this research uses cognitive mapping to organise and analyse the data, and interpretation of the maps can help the researcher and the reader to make sense of the context of the decision-making process.

To understand organizational behaviours especially cross-culturally, one requires access to indigenous frameworks of meaning, and there are gaps in the cross-cultural literature in this area. Cultural interpretation is best accomplished if the researcher has a high degree of linguistic and cultural fluency in the national cultures being studied. In this regard this research holds the promise to advance theories of organizational behaviours, since it concerns the intercultural behaviour of French managers in a Chinese cultural context, initiated by theories in the English-language literature and presents the result to an Anglo-Saxon audience. With the author has a cultural background as a native Chinese, and over twenty years of interactivity and sense-making from professional, educational and social experience in France and the United Kingdom.

Much research in organizational decision-making has concluded that sporadic or muddling through process is effective with high uncertainty non-routine decision-makings, while a more orderly constricted process is appropriate for more clear-cut routine decisions, which support the general well-established distinction between routine and non-routine decision-making (Hickson *et al.*, 1986). However, when the decision-making activities happen in a different cultural or institutional context,

strange or even contradictory to decision makers' understanding, will the routine decisions in one context become non-routine in another?

Social science itself is a Western cultural artefact. As we have discussed before with reference to routine and non-routine decision-making: if the decision-making activities happen in a different cultural or institutional context, routine decisions in one cultural context may become non-routine in another. The cultural context being studied is different from the one where Anglo-Saxon management theory originated, namely the United States. Furthermore, the cognitive framework of the researcher carries, to a certain extent, a mental process of understanding and interpretation that may be different from how and where these theories originate. All this requires a very open mind towards organizational behaviour and cross-cultural theories in this research.

It is noted that the majority of cross-cultural research on decision-making styles adopts a large scale quantitative research methodology. Ali and colleagues (Ali et al., 1997) randomly selected the participants in public and private organisations, and used questionnaires to gather data for the categorization of managers' decision-making styles; similarly Darwish (1998), who uses the same categorisation of the decision-making styles, used a questionnaire to measure the variables that contribute to the decision-making styles (culture and technology). Muna (Muna, 1985, Muna, 2011) developed another categorisation of decision-making styles using similar a quantitative questionnaire methodology.

One of the important methodologies for identifying linkage is the cognitive mapping technique, meanwhile it also provides a mean to arrange data and present them graphically. This research therefore, is designed to use ethnographic accounts organized around cognitive mapping, that is, cognitive mapping underpinned by description. Based on the above observation and discussion, the methodological issues and research design will be further discussed and presented in detail in the next chapter.

Chapter Three Methodology

Choosing a research methodology has been a point of debate for social science and management researchers. Mintzberg (1975) has argued that existing methodologies tend to produce different results and perform different actions. It is generally agreed that the process of selecting a research methodology and methods is to select the “appropriate” rather than “right” or “correct” one(s), because one method cannot be said to be better than the other. As Hardy (1985) claims, there is no perfect methodology: the type of approach depends on different factors such as the nature and objective of the research. Other factors also include the context of research setting as well as research problems.

3.1 Research methodology in social science

In general researchers could adopt either qualitative or quantitative research approaches. The two approaches have had separate but equal status, but recently there has been a move towards using the interaction of the qualitative and quantitative methodologies; the concept of triangulation (Olsen, 2004).

The definition of qualitative and quantitative research would include the way of thinking about the social reality, the way of approaching it and conceptualising it; the designs and methods used to represent this way of thinking and collect data; and the data, numeric data for quantitative research, and non-numeric data (mostly words) for qualitative research.

Originally organisational behaviour theory has followed the same pathways as other social science disciplines in the process of knowledge construction (Smith, 1998). It has faced similar challenges at a time of flux in both philosophical foundations and methodology for studying phenomena in social science. A wide range of approaches with different assumptions and recommendations for the practice have been explored, which returns repeatedly to certain basic ideas such as knowledge, reality, causality, and value. From the last two decades of the twentieth century social scientists and researchers have debated the relationship between knowledge and reality (Smith, 1998), which is a key issue for social science inquiry.

Historically the scientific approach to the study of the natural world, which appeared in the seventeenth century during the Enlightenment, provided the original template for social science through an approach to social knowledge construction. The process of knowledge construction involves first defining the research objects as existing real things, and comprehends these real objects through a human being's conscious mind. In this way, social science tends to reproduce the closed system model of scientific research and apply it to the study of people and the social world that is constructed by people. However, such a way of viewing the real world has been found problematic because of the complex, uncertain and interconnected nature of the object of analysis when people try to understand themselves and their own conditions of existence. By the late twentieth century, many epistemological approaches had been questioned and proposed as a solution in social science, as well as in management research.

Management research, as part of the social sciences, faces the same challenges in research philosophies and methodologies. Objects of management research enquiries

tend to be subjective and relative, for example, how can one be sure that the concept of “job satisfaction” is a straightforward representation of an existing object if it relies on people’s judgement? More precisely, how can one be sure that its meaning is the same for different people? If the meanings of such fundamental concepts are taken for granted, there is a risk of research being fundamentally flawed from the outset.

The open nature of social systems implies that factors influencing the outcome of a certain event are often multiple, varying and open-ended, and the cause-effect relationship found in a controlled or assumed environment may often prove to be difficult to duplicate in real social life. If for example, research demonstrates a causal relationship between a manager’s willingness to take risk and their group decision-making orientation; does this mean that such a relationship will exist in complex and varying social contexts? What about the other factors involved which may have an effect on risk taking and decision-making? Furthermore, the concept of “taking risk” may have different meanings for managers from varying contexts and cultures: how can one be sure “risk taking” for a British manager means the same as for a Chinese one? A British technical manager may consider that deciding the size of a mechanical part is his or her responsibility instead of a “risk”, while a Chinese one may avoid the decision because it is too risky. Meanings such as these may vary substantially across cultures so that well accepted concepts of decision-making or management may also vary. Management research concerning organizational behaviours in different cultural contexts is at least equally, if not more, complex than those in single countries. Therefore researchers need to be careful in charting new pathways of knowledge construction, and they need to use innovative designs for social and management research studies.

As discussed in the preceding paragraphs, the nature of cross-cultural management studies leads to constant reflections on social research and its implications, and consequently requires more innovative research approaches because the researched phenomenon occurs in multi-cultural context. This implies that on the one hand, more unfamiliar or unknown elements may occupy a larger part of the knowledge enquiry process; on the other hand, the existing theories and outcomes accumulated in one culture may not be applicable in another, despite the fact that the activity or the object may be similar.

What McDonald's represents in China for example, is very different from the country where McDonald's originated. American people may never associate McDonald's with a professional "White Collar" life-style or romance, but these are images associated with McDonald in China. McDonald's advertisements in China emphasise that, as well as being a happy place for children, McDonald's represents a different and easy lifestyle for young professional people¹; and a place for couples to spend their time together and enjoy life². If one only looks at the object – McDonald's, yes it is "globalised": it exists and operates in many countries. But the context in which it operates could be very different, although superficially the décor and food are more or less the same.

3.2 Meaning and cross-cultural context

¹ <http://www.adzop.com/downinfo/26107.html>

² <http://www.adzop.com/downinfo/25532.html>

A significant question to answer is: how should the phenomena in management be studied in a cross-cultural context? This encapsulates several issues related to research philosophy and methodology, such as the status and construction of management knowledge, including how to engage in management practice and cross-cultural management enquiries. This research involves organisational behaviour theories, and specifically decision-making. The consideration of its social and cultural settings has increased the challenges in this complex topic (Adler, 1984, Redding, 1994, Yaprak, 2008).

Many researchers in cultural studies have developed different dimensions for comparison across cultures. One of the most famous and often used pieces of research is that of Hofstede (1980). In addition to the four dimensions found, a further study on Asian cultures brought a fifth dimension (Hofstede and Bond, 1988) – Confucius dynamics – which is strongly associated with economic growth. Then a question has to be asked before using them in cultural comparative studies: how can one be sure that the participants' answers to the questions, when they are from very different cultures, accurately reflect the essence of their own cultures? Furthermore, how can one be sure that those participants hold the same understanding of meanings of all the concepts? What if there are variables and concepts in one culture that are unknown in another? Take the Chinese word “guanxi” for example; there is no equivalent translation which is used directly in English. Literally, “guanxi” can be translated into “relationship”; figuratively, it stands for any type of relationship; it is also understood as the network of relationships among various parties that cooperate and support one another; and it could function as an information network. Not only is there no equivalent translation in English, in China the concept itself is clearer without a

definition than with one. There are many complexities surrounding this one word. Chinese themselves find that it can only be sensed but not explained in words. It is easy to give examples of the concept, but virtually impossible and unnecessary to give a complete definition.

Ludwig Wittgenstein argued that the meaning of words is derived from the way words are used (Wittgenstein, 1958). What Chinese insiders understand by the use of words or gestures might be very different from what non-Chinese outsiders would understand: we don't understand Chinese gestures any more than Chinese sentences' (Wittgenstein, Zettel, §219). Something Chinese people take for granted might be difficult or even impossible for someone from outside the culture to understand, which is to say that communication is more effective if one is inside a group of people that share and understand the same culture.

So what is the implication of this for cultural "outsiders"? One of the answers is that a cultural "insiders" interpretation and communication may provide a "guidebook" for people operating in an unfamiliar context. By exploration and explanation of why people do what they do in a cross-cultural context, cultural "outsiders" may be able to understand people's behaviour in another culture, and make better predictions to avoid being excessively surprised by local people's actions and reactions.

To summarize, the understanding of "meanings" in different cultures is the key to cross-cultural management research. People familiar with the culture(s) involved are in the best position to interpret and make sense of the behaviours. For cultural "outsiders" it is important to understand the meanings and avoid surprises when

operating in another culture. Verbal and non-verbal or contextual communication is most effective among cultural “insiders”, therefore a researcher is in the best position for interpretation and sense making if he or she has a high level of understanding of the cultures involved. This is an unusual factor in this research project.

Management knowledge and the approaches to its knowledge construction process are deeply situated in the context of both historical periods, and social and cultural contexts. The knowledge construction is mainly concerned with people trying to understand themselves and their own conditions of existence. Individual behaviours and decisions cannot be separated from wider social norms, values, beliefs and constraints, which consequently shape their perceptions in the surrounding context. While I acknowledge the complexity of the research this does not mean that it is impossible to make sense of the knowledge. Instead, the researcher should be open to unexpected explanations and different interpretations. Therefore to understand the managers’ decision-making behaviour in relation to cultural factors, the first thing that needs to be studied is how managers behave in a different cultural environment; how the original cultural background and past experiences influence their process for making decisions in another culture; and how to understand and interpret the managers’ perceptions and behaviours.

This research, as discussed in Chapter 2, will take a qualitative research approach. More precisely, ethnographic interpretative methodology with data organized by cognitive mapping techniques is the key contribution of this study.

3.3 Qualitative methodology in cross-cultural studies

A cross-cultural study in management is a complex topic involving unstructured problems, multiple interactions; not to mention language differences, cultural bias, among others. At the present stage qualitative methodology carries more promise for advancing the research literature, not only because qualitative methodology is more appropriate for theory generation, but also its flexibility to reflect and reformulate on established theory.

Middle-range theories, such as stated by Glaser and Strauss (1967) as substantive and formal theories, can be generated from comparative analysis. Most useful work in cross-cultural management research falls into this category, because the conclusions to inquiries limit the number of assumptions but meanwhile contain fairly detailed accuracy. These theories can be used by other researchers situated in their particular culture, to reflect on their own work and improve it. As stated by Hofstede and Bond (1988), culture, being a fundamental phenomenon, not only affects our behaviour but also affects the theories we are able to develop to explain our behaviours.

Qualitative research can also help better understanding of complex cross-cultural issues because it emphasized comprehensive, interdependent, holistic structures that are dynamic and predictive (Wright, 1996). "It can reconcile contradictory findings because the role of any given variable is seen as the outcome of different combinations of variables, and what is important is the interaction" (p 69). In this research the qualitative approach helps make better sense in the complex

intercultural interactive research setting, of inconclusive variables which contribute to managers' decision-making process.

3.4 Cognitive mapping

Cognitive mapping is not a methodology in itself. It represents a collective term for a set of techniques which allow the researcher to obtain graphical representations of individual understanding of a particular issue or problem (Eden, 1992, Langfield-Smith, 1992). Cognitive maps are graphic representations that locate people in relation to their information environments, and which provide a frame of reference for what is known and believed (Fiol and Huff, 1992). It can also be used to elicit the structure and the content of people's mental process and provides a mental model (Daniels *et al.*, 1995).

Eden (1992) has put the concept in a less profound way:

"... cognitive maps can be seen as a picture or visual aid in comprehending the mappers' understanding of particular, and selective, elements of the thoughts (rather than thinking) of an individual, group or organization. They may also be seen as a representation that is amenable to analysis by both the mapper and others". (p262)

Studies using cognitive maps indicate that this technique is a very useful tool to add to the existing management research tools (Eden, 1990, Fiol and Huff, 1992, Hodgkinson and Sparrow, 2002). As for every research methodology, cognitive

mapping has its own strengths and weaknesses, which are summarized in the following table:

Table 4 Advantages and Disadvantages of Cognitive Mapping

<u>Advantages</u>	<u>Disadvantages</u>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Structure thought through symbolic representation ○ Graphical rather than linear layout ○ Quick insight into the structure of information ○ Information clearly communicable ○ Manage large amount of qualitative data ○ Capture of individual knowledge and experience 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Undue influence on elicitation process ○ Need skill and training ○ Difficult to interpret maps ○ Difficult to administrate large maps ○ Time-consuming ○ Possible uncomfortable feeling of participants

The advantages of cognitive mapping are mainly concerned with the technique of elicitation and the use of the results. For the technique, this methodology offers structured thought through symbolic representation, graphical representation rather than linear layout, managing a large amount of qualitative information, and can improve interview capability. For the results, this method offers a graphical representation of participants' understanding of a particular issue or problem, information obtained is clearly communicable, can gain insight into the structure of information, and pictures display participants' own thinking about the performance process. However, it is unlikely, in the elicitation process, to avoid undue influence either from the researchers or environmental factors. Processes of elicitation and interpretation require highly trained individuals. Characteristics of time-consuming and the difficulty of managing large maps restrain the numbers of samples and there

may be some uncomfortable feelings from participants when their thoughts are explored by someone else.

To summarize the discussion so far, cognitive maps provide reference for what is known and believed, therefore they include, or highlight some information which is important; while excluding other information either because it is thought less important or it is not known. So, there are at least two questions here: 1) what are the criteria for determining the importance of information; 2) what maybe the impact of missing the unknown information in the research?

As Eden (1992) has pointed out, the term Cognitive Mapping is often misleading for it implies that the map is a model of cognition, that is, a model of thinking. Few maps or mapping methods can reasonably make and substantiate this claim because the ability of a map to be a model of cognition depends mostly upon the adequacy of the cognitive theory, and the method of elicitation of cognition, with the latter being more problematic than the former. Most management research using cognitive mapping usually made presumptions that 1) the map describes or predicts behaviour and 2) there is a link between cognition and behaviour. The first presumption is subject to the adequacy of cognitive theories and process of elicitation and interpretation; while the second one should recognize that emotion may play a role in the presumed link. Therefore the only reasonable claim of cognitive maps is that:

1. “They may represent subjective data more meaningfully than other models and so have utility for researchers interested in subjective knowledge”;

2. “They may act as a tool to facilitate decision-making, problem-solving, and negotiation within the context of organizational intervention”.

(Eden, 1992) p262

The diverse nature of human cognition inevitably leads to the diversity of the models which study people's thinking – cognitive maps. In managerial cognitive research, Fiol and Huff (1992) argue that the strategic issues and concerns of managers require a “portfolio” of different types of cognitive maps. Although research on managerial mapping until recently has focused mostly on “the causal inferences embedded in managers' thinking”, some researchers have begun to draw attention to maps that are not explicitly causal in nature. The latter may not provide the suggestion of cause of action, but the implications for practitioners could be that the model may make them start thinking of their own decisions, sometimes unconsciously made. In my research it is related to the involvement of other people in the decision-making process. It may help the reflection on advantage or disadvantage and the effectiveness of individual or participative decision styles in the decision-making process, and may consequently improve their decision-making in similar circumstances.

The map that developed by Eden and his associates (Eden and Huxham, 1988) could be an appropriate starting point for this research. Their research is concerned with the ongoing needs of managers to understand the way in which they interact with their environment; while this project is to study the managers' decision-making styles in relationship to different circumstances. The manager can be regarded as an active “scientist” (Kelly's psychology of personal construct theory (Kelly, 1955)) who is constantly trying to understand and interact with the environment. By linking different

issues of a particular process, the cognitive map highlights these connections from which implications of action may emerge.

Having examined the theories of cognitive mapping, it has characteristics and qualities that are appropriate to the proposed research. The aim of this research is to study the subjective knowledge of managers' adaptation of different decision-making styles. Cognitive maps can give the graphical representation of managers' thoughts when they make this choice, as well as the links between different factors that influence their choice. There will be structured information about the relationships amongst the constructs and factors which enables the exploration of the extent to which national culture influence the decision of managers in comparison with other factors. There are multiple factors that influence the manager's decision-making style. National culture is one factor (based on the literature). Cognitive mapping will allow the researcher to separate out different factors that influence one specific decision. And, then it comes possible to analyse the relationship between the various factors and the decision-making style (Hodgkinson and Sparrow, 2002). Although cognitive mapping has been used for management research for over two decades, there has not been much application in the field of cultural comparative research.

Cognitive mapping is again a technique that has been developed in Western management theory. Research techniques are culture bound, one instrument developed in one culture may have limited applicability in another where people may not attach the same value to the concepts. And the nature of cross-cultural studies is highly dependent on the cultural context, as the on-going research, this method needs the complementary quality interpretation and description. First, the

process of elicitation of the maps with the linkage is interactive between the researcher and participant, that is, the researcher puts the links and shows the map to participants and gets feedback and / or confirmation. Therefore, it is likely to contain the subjective judgement of the researcher, not to mention the interpretation of the maps. Secondly, consideration should be given to the generalisation of the results. A map only represents one piece of one person's cognitive thought at a certain time for the issue being studied and the time-consuming nature of the methodology does not allow large amount of maps to be done especially in the limited time of the research. So the research must be designed to have cases that match on certain criteria. Then it is possible to gain some solid understandings from the complex and dynamic phenomenon in this study.

Now that the relevant methodological issues have been discussed separately, it is time to summarize and develop the details of the research methodology that will be used for the research project.

3.6 Research design

Cognitive mapping is one of the important methodologies in the emerging research approach to cultural comparative research. Being able to understand the managers' perception of environment, and construct the linkage between national culture and individual behaviours, understanding to the managerial decision-making process will be further developed. This research uses cognitive mapping to organise and analyse the data and use the maps as the foundation for interpretation and discussion.

The main reasons for the methodology proposed above, apart from its appropriateness for the research, are some complimentary characteristics of cognitive mapping and interpretation. Meaning resides in social practice, and not just in the heads of individuals (Dey, 1993). Cognitive mapping produces a graphic representation of how the manager thinks about an issue or situation (in this research the decision process on decision-making styles), linkage between different constructs (in this research the factors that influence the decision-making styles) are identified from the pieces of thoughts, and the data is from interviews with managers. Interpretation of the maps can add some understanding to meanings of business practice, that is, the environmental factors of the same issues. There are also techniques to find linkage between different factors. These understandings could be referred back to what are generated from cognitive mapping, and findings duo-servo. Similarly, cognitive mapping could be supplementary to interpretation, especially in data arrangement. The technique of cognitive mapping has been seen as aiding the interview process through capturing the chains of argument and linking the together insights into the nature of the issues are acquired. Interviews using cognitive mapping have often been used to facilitate data collection as well (Eden *et al.*, 1992).

The data collection method is semi-structured open questions interviews. The structure is designed to have two general categories of decisions with distinctive characteristics, namely decisions for promotion and decisions for solving conflict. In the literature review in Chapter two it is found that one of the gaps in prior studies on decision-making styles is the lack of information on managers' decision-making behaviour with their peers. Therefore the category of decisions for solving conflict was divided into two sub-categories: conflict among subordinates and conflict with

same level manager. The interview leaves some open questions that give managers the opportunity to develop his/her cognitive process in decision-making.

This research aims to study the impact of national culture on managers' individual and/or group decision-making, explore to what extent managers' national culture background influence their choices on this. From the literature review it can be seen that despite all the differences on research of decision-making styles, there are two basic categories of them: managers either make the decision by themselves - autocratic, or decide to involve other people in the decision-making process - participative, although the reasons for involving other people varies: for information, for sharing responsibility, and so on. The literature in section 2.2 and 2.3 in Chapter Two also shows the proof of different factors that contribute to the managers' choice of decision-making styles, including decision-specific, managerial characteristic and environmental factors. Based on these discussions, questions in semi-structured interviews will be formed in the following principle:

1. Several decisions or situations will be found that have happened to, or were experienced by the managers who participate in the research will be identified.
2. Managers will then be asked if they have involved other people in the decision-making process, and asked the reasons why or why not.
3. If some of them do involve other people in the process, it is important to find the purpose of the involvement, for example, is it for information input, or to share responsibility.

4. Questions will be open rather than closed, which provides freedom to the managers to construct their mental maps with factors that are not limited by the findings in the existing literature.

The literature of cultural studies serves two purposes:

1. It is the criteria for choosing cases or samples, that is, participants should be from two distinct cultures, or from one culture working in another distinctively different one.
2. It is also the criteria for deciding the decision types that used in the design of interview structure.
3. Findings will be linked, compared, and revised with the existing literature. There will be “added value” to the literature because no matter what the finding is, either in accordance or not with the existing literature, the linkage between national culture and individual behaviour will further the understanding of the impact of national culture to decision-making process.

Participants are French managers who have worked or are working in China. There were several reasons to choose these participants. First, French and Chinese are two relatively distinctive national cultures. The root and history of these two cultures are very different from each other. Secondly, the researcher has a certain understanding of both cultures, by being native of one, and working with people from the other for many years. The advantage is not only the familiarity of the environment to the researcher: knowledge of the assumptions, beliefs and values come naturally; but also the ability of the researcher to understand and analyse their own culture. This helps

with being more reflective in studying another culture (France) with yet another culture's generated theory (Anglo-American). Those French managers ideally would be those who have worked in China for more than 3 years, in which case will have a level of understanding of Chinese culture in organizational context. They have to make sense of surrounding Chinese environment in order to work effectively, if not efficiently. The data from this type of participants provides the chance to make sense of their sense-making of a context that is native and / or familiar to the researcher.

3.7 Research instrument

Based on the principles discussed in the above section, two types of decision-making are used for the structure of the interviews: decision for promotion, and decision for solving conflict. These two decisions bear distinctive decision-specific characteristics. For example, decision for promotion in a relatively developed and steady business environment such as France, is highly routine. There is an annual opportunity for employees to express their wishes for having more responsibilities; managers follow certain procedures for deciding the promotions; and moreover, the chance for promotion occurs only infrequently. However, when French managers work in a foreign cultural environment, this may change totally. Questions that concentrate on the decision process for promotion therefore, carry real promise to discover something very new for data collection. Decisions for solving conflict, on the other hand, are usually a non-routine decision even in a familiar working context. But generally managers have also a procedure or even a sense of intuition, for finding a solution or at least to start to find the solution for solving conflicts. A non-routine decision like this in another cultural context can bring more unknown variables and their combined

consequences into the picture, which provides a better chance to gain insights from the data collected.

After several revisions the structure and interview questions were decided. Each interview was estimated to last one hour. A copy of the questions is attached in Appendix 1.

The initial plan was to record the interview and at the same time make the maps “on site”, since the cognitive mapping techniques can help to explore the thoughts of participants in an interactive manner. However, after two pilot interviews it was found that making maps based on interview transcripts was more efficient than making the maps “on site”. First, when an interview directly incorporates mapping, the interview lasts longer, and this has practical logistical implications. Second, the quality of a map created in the confines of an interview, even by a highly skilled “mapper” is questionable. And finally, the interview was semi-structured, with a framework that already guides the process. So it was decided that the interviews would be recorded, transcribed, and finally transformed into cognitive maps.

During the interview and data collection process, the interview questions were gradually improved. There were three significant adjustments. First, some of the interview questions related to the importance of characteristics of different decisions, such as information, time availability and so on, but all of the interviewees misunderstood the question to be the characteristics or quality of the people they were talking about. This is probably because the former is more theoretical related; for practitioners the latter is more relevant to their everyday management decision-

making activity. By modifying the interview structure this misunderstanding was avoided, while it was still possible to get relevant information about these characteristics. Second, some of the categories of questions needed to be clarified: the questions in part 3 and part 4 in the original structure were all about conflicts or problems, the difference is where the conflict happens in the hierarchy. Similarly, for the questions in part 2, the promotion also happens in different hierarchies and under different authorities. So in part 2, the element of hierarchy is added while part 3 and part 4 are not necessarily separated in the interviews. And third, some managers tried to elicit, perhaps unconsciously, what they thought the research wanted to hear. The risk of this is reduced by adding more explanation in the interview structure which emphasized the importance of managers' subjective point of view, by explaining that what is important for this research is their individual subjective opinion on the topic.

The next chapter presents a summary of the interviews, data analysis using the cognitive mapping and interpretation methodology.

Chapter Four Data Analysis (1): Presentation

This chapter is part one of the data analysis. It introduces the process of organising and analysing the data, and presents the organised data in the order in which interviews were conducted. The chapter forms the foundation for discussion and interpretation in the next chapter, which will be part two of the data analysis.

4.1 Summary of the interviews

The interviews were conducted in Shanghai, China. It is one of the most developed cities in the region with the highest number of expatriates from all corners of the world. This maximises the opportunity to find appropriate candidates for participation. Initially, candidates were identified by reaching out to the author's existing professional contacts. Other managers were introduced in succession.

Nine interviews have been conducted with French managers working in China, which contain 20 accounts of managers' decision-making activities for different decisions. Ages ranged from late 20s to 60, with the majority in their 30s and 40s. Most were at middle level management, that is, departmental managers; there was one junior level manager and four executive managers. All of the participants work with both their subordinate team members and their peer managers, which provided an excellent opportunity to explore their decision-making behaviour in different management hierarchies. The companies they worked in covered a wide range of different business sectors including automobile parts, electrical, household products, handicraft, and consultancy. Table 5 below summarizes general information about the participants.

Table 5 Summary of interview participants

No.	Gender	Position	Age	Years in China	Industry
1	Male	Executive	30-59	10	Automotive
2	Male	Sales director	30-59	3	Electric
3	Male	Consultant	Over 60	17	Consultancy
4	Male	Project Coordinator	20-30	1	Specialist automotive
5	Male	Executive	30-59	13	Handicraft
6	Male	Operation Director	30-59	3	Cosmetic
7	Female	Education (present)	30-59	10	Education
8	Male	Executive	30-59	9	Construction
9	Male	Marketing Director	30-59	4	Food
10	Male	Executive	30-59	n.a.	Petrochemical

All interviews but one were conducted in English. This is the business language used by the managers in China on a daily basis, as well as the language used throughout the research project. The one manager who could not speak English well was interviewed in both French and Chinese, with his interpreter presented for accuracy. Thirty percent of the interview transcriptions were checked with the interviewees after they were transcribed from the interview notes.

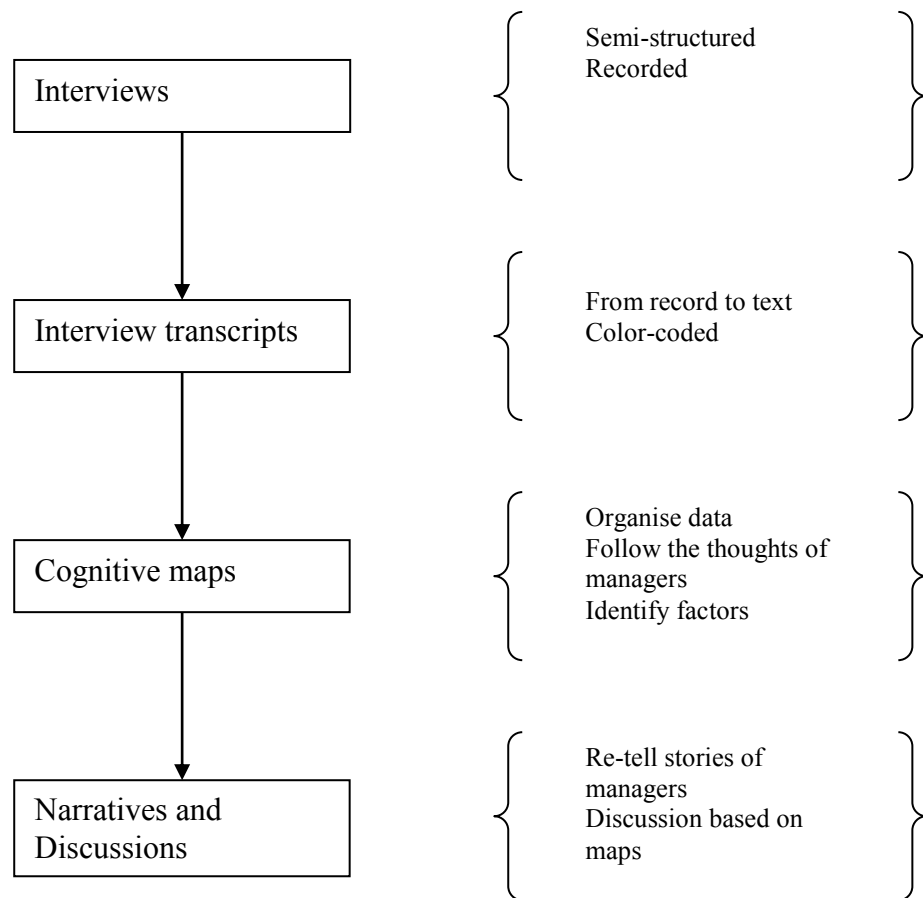
An interview script is attached in Appendix 2. Due to the confidentiality agreement with the participants, the script is redacted to anonymise the identities of them.

The interviews were then colour coded and converted into cognitive maps using the software Decision Explorer. These maps illustrate the decision-making processes from each case. The information in maps is limited to managers' accounts of their individual and/or group decision-making process and the reasons and contexts of these decisions. This means that the interview transcripts contain richer information compared to what is communicated by the maps. Therefore the analysis in this chapter will follow the links in the maps as guidance, draw on all the relevant information in the transcripts and provides a complete story for each case using the form of narrations. Examples of maps are enclosed in the Appendix.

4.2 Introduction to the process of analysis

As discussed in the previous two chapters, Cognitive Mapping is the major methodology for data analysis in this study. The interviews were converted into cognitive maps using the software Decision Explorer. Diagram 1 summarises the process of data transformation.

Diagram 1: from interviews to cognitive maps



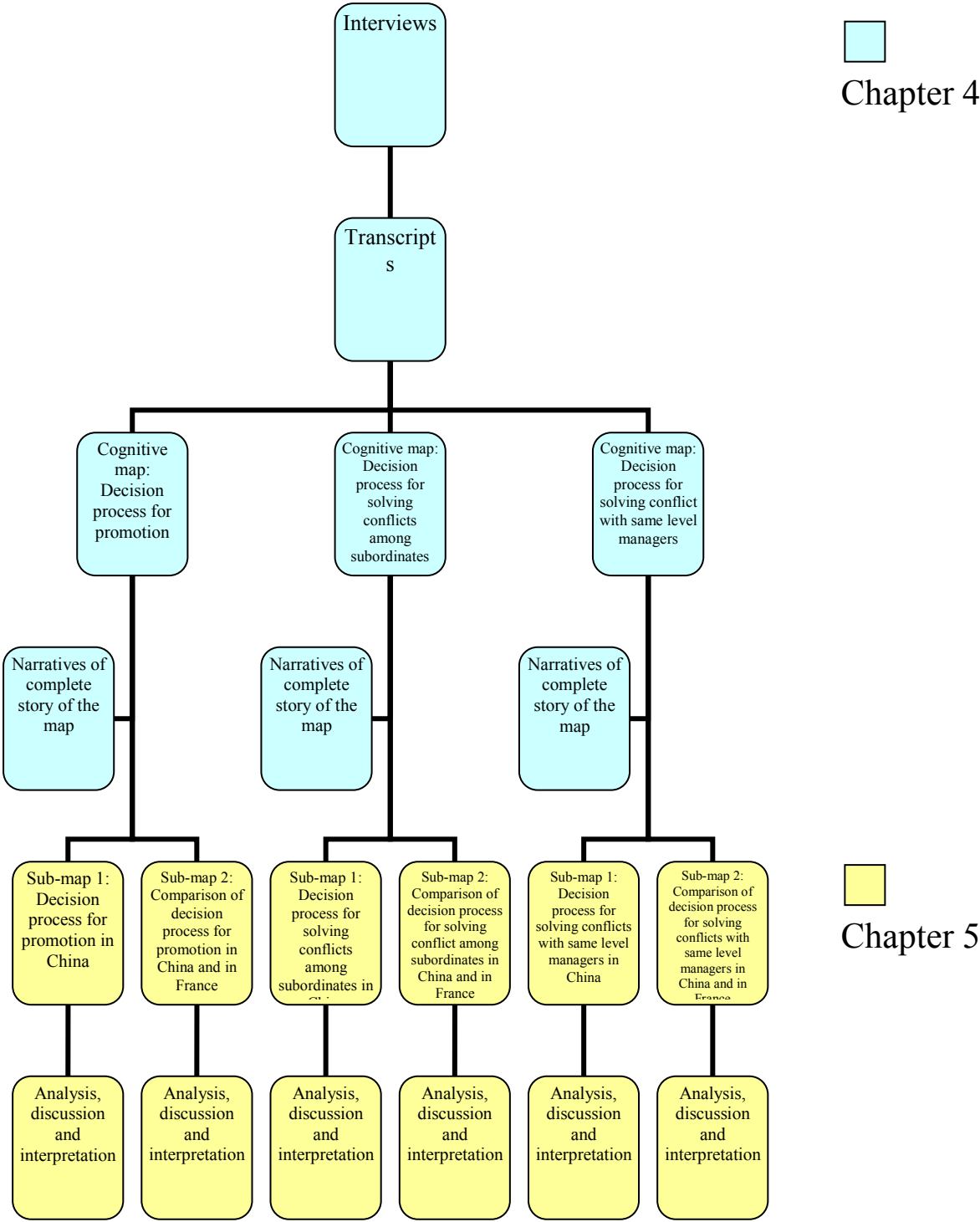
Transcribed interview texts are colour coded based on each manager's account of how and why they adopted certain decision-making styles. For example, one manager stated that he used a group decision-making style to make decisions for promotion, because it helps with implementation of the decisions after they are made; and it reduces the risk for the manager. The cognitive map of this account of the decision-making would illustrate the decision-making styles of this manager when making this type of decisions, that is, decisions for promotion, as well as illustrate graphically the rationale that the manager provides for using a group decisions making style.

An example of a colour-coded interview transcript is attached in Appendix 3, for the reader's reference.

The process of colour coding into cognitive mapping filtered out the irrelevant information on decision-making and decision-making styles. Twenty of the managers' accounts of their decision-making were converted to twenty cognitive maps. Each illustrates graphically a manager's complete account of the decision-making process. The information contained in the maps is extremely relevant to managers' accounts of their individual and / or group decision-making process, and the reasons and contexts for these decisions. The analysis in this chapter focuses on presentations of each cognitive map with a narrative on decision-making styles. Examples of cognitive maps are enclosed in the Appendix.

The next chapter, Chapter Five, is the second part of the data analysis. It will focus on the detailed discussion and interpretation of the data and the maps. The complete process of the data analysis of both Chapter Four and Chapter Five is shown in the diagram below.

Diagram 2: The process of data organisation and analysis



4.3 Summary of data presentation

The remainder of this Chapter presents each decision-making process in three parts: background information, cognitive maps, and a detailed narratives of the managers' account of their decision-making process.

Data is generated from interviews with 9 French managers working in China. The interview questions were designed to concentrate on two types of decisions: promotion and conflict, due to the distinctive decision-specific characteristics that were discussed in Chapter 2. Decisions for promotion are usually a more routine decision-making activity for managers, however the process may vary due to the market situation, and different social and cultural contexts. Decisions that involve resolving conflict are more problem-solving oriented. Each decision could be a non-routine practice in either familiar or unfamiliar work settings or cultural contexts.

A total of twenty maps were produced from the interviews. Table 6 below summarises the available information in terms of decision categories for promotion and conflict.

Table 6 Data and map availability

Interview Decision	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
Promotion	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Conflict 1	Y	Y	N	N	Y	Y	N	Y	Y
Conflict 2	Y	Y	N	Y	Y	Y	Y		Y

Legend: Conflict 1: decisions on solving conflicts among subordinate team members

Conflict 2: decisions on solving conflicts with same level managers

Y: cognitive map available

N: cognitive map not available

As discussed in the above section, the interviews were transcribed, colour coded and translated into cognitive maps. The content in the transcripts that were relevant to the decision-making process were colour coded according to the types of decisions. Using the software, Decision Explorer, each decision-making process and the reasoning behind it were visualised into a cognitive map. The numbers automatically generated by the software were then marked on the original transcripts for narration. Each map follows the reasoning of a certain type of decision that a manager made, either for promotion or for solving conflict. Information in each map includes the statements and concepts of how the decisions were made individually or in groups; differences or similarities in decision-making in China and France; and the reason why certain kinds of process were followed. The maps are the graphical representations of the managers' account of their decision-making process.

The following sections are the detailed presentation of twenty stories of the managers' account of their decision-making for promotion and conflict solving. Each interview is presented with an introduction summarising background information about the company and the interviewee, cognitive maps³ of the decisions, and narrations, description and interpretation of each map.

The reader should note that because the native language of the interviewees is not English, quotes from their transcripts will inevitably contain inconsistency and inaccuracies. Corrections are provided in brackets.

³ To make it simpler to view, only Map 1 from interview 1 was included in the text as an example. All the cognitive maps will be presented in the Appendix.

The maps are constructed using the following notations:

Notation for the cognitive maps:

- *Concept style normal*: concepts and statements from the interviews
- *Concept style bold and italic*: ***interpretations***
- *Line with arrow*: linkage →
- *Line with “c”*: comparison with another culture $\xrightarrow[c]{}$
- *Line with “p”*: next step in the decision-making process $\xrightarrow[p]{}$
- *Line only*: connotation / related statements —
- *Dotted line with arrow*: interpretation / explanation→

Explanation of summary terms:

- *Value held*: the working / social value that managers have from their cultural and education background, i.e. French culture
- *Local context*: the local culture in which the managers work in, i.e. Chinese culture
- *Economic factors*: the economic context in which the companies' market and business activities exercised, either in France or China
- *Hierarchy*: management hierarchy system, related to respect to authority, or companies' management structure
- *Motivation and implementation*: factors that motivate managers and team members in working, and help the implementation of the decisions after they are made
- *Decision specific*: factors related to the decision itself, for example type of decisions *Time*: time availability in the decision-making process

- *Company context*: factors that related to the company's situation and culture
- *Industry context*: industrial factors of the companies
- *Labour factors*: factors that related to the labour force

4.4 Interview 1

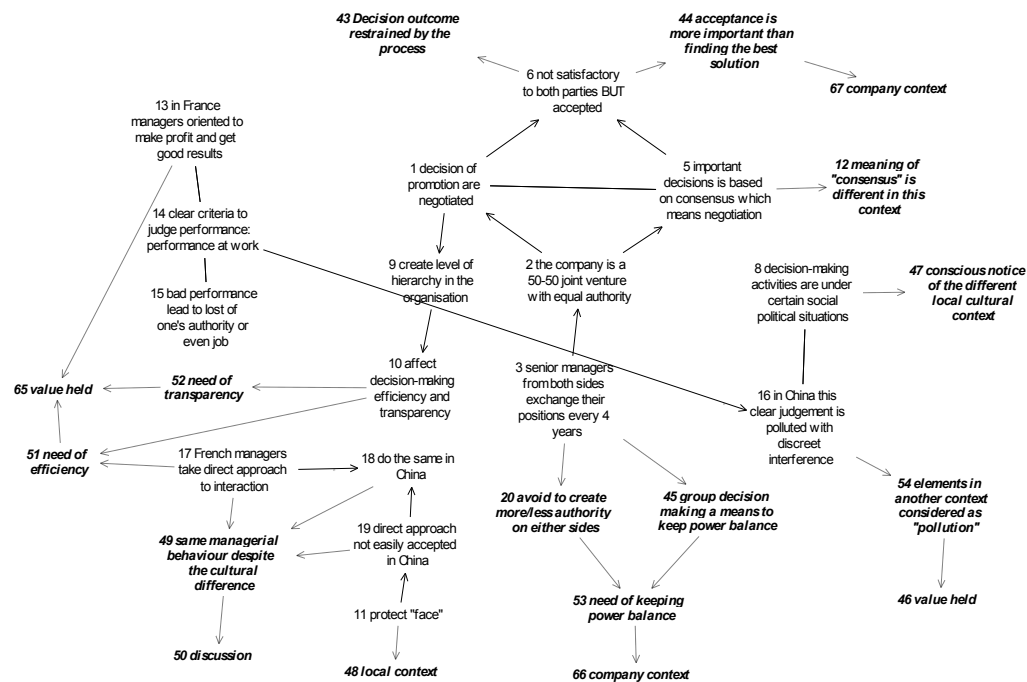
Introduction:

The company is a Sino-German joint venture producing spare parts for the automotive industry. Shares in the joint venture are equally divided between the German shareholding company, and the Chinese one which is a “state-owned” enterprise. The French interviewee Mr. L has worked in different companies in China for over 10 years and speaks reasonably good Chinese. As one of the three expatriates, he has the most senior position as the Deputy General Manager in the company. The other two expatriates are in charge of production, technology and quality. The company employs over 600 people.

Cognitive maps and narration:

Map 1: Complete map of the decision process for promotion – Interview 1

Please see Appendix for a larger map.



Narration of Map 1 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 1)

Map 1 is the graphic representation of the decision-making process for promotion in Company 1. According to the interviewee, Mr. L, Deputy General Manager of the company, the decision for promotion is “negotiated” (1). “(They are) negotiated between the Chinese and the foreign party” as “we are in a 50-50 (share) joint venture with equal authority”. As a 50-50 equal shared joint venture, the company is designed to have equally distributed authority for both Chinese and foreign shareholders (2). To keep this balance, the company currently has “a Chinese General Manager, I (Mr. L) am (is) the Deputy General Manager, and we (they) exchange position(s) every four years; while we have presently a German as Chairman of the Board and a Chinese Vice-Chairman of the board. At the time the General Manager(s) change,

their positions also change” (3). So “basically (the) decision process, important decisions” in the company are “based on consensus” (5). Mr. L specifically states the meaning of consensus here: “consensus means negotiation, for promoting these people we have discussions, negotiations and reach finally the decision” (5). So the decisions for promotion are negotiated between the managers who represent the two shareholders, which means a process of discussion, concessions, and agreement. Consensus in this situation is an agreement of the result from negotiation, which may not provide complete satisfaction to both sides but is accepted nonetheless under the circumstances (6). It seems here that the decision outcome is restrained by the decision-making process (43), which is itself restrained by organisational context; and the acceptance of the decisions is more important than making the best choice available in this specific organisational context (44). The “negotiating” decision-making process therefore, in addition to the positions exchange in the company, to avoid create more (or less) authority on either sides (20) and used as a means to keep this power balance (45) in this specific organisational context.

However, Mr. L critically observed that decisions for promotion made in this negotiation process “tend to create too much level (of hierarchy) in the organisation” (9), and this is “not good” because it “affect(s) the decision-making and the activity, the transparency”. Mr. L is not satisfied with the “negotiating” decision-making process because it affects the decision-making efficiency and transparency (10), which is against the working value of transparency and efficiency in the decision-making process (51/52). In comparing French managers with Chinese ones, Mr. L states that they “are oriented to make profit, having good results” (13). “Criteria to judge the performanceis very clear, is the performance at work” (14). However

for him “in China, all these judgement is polluted by too much complicity between people (who are) acquainted since 20 years, discreetly but for sure interfere” (16). Here Mr. L talks about the social network in China, and the aspect of local context is considered as interference (54), because it is in contrast with the management value that he holds from his original culture (46). Mr. L consciously notices the different local context and its impact on the decision-making process (47), that “in China we must not forget (that) we are in certain social political situations” (8).

There seems to be a contradictory aspect of Mr. L’s decision-making practice. According to Mr. L, French managers tend to take a more “direct” approach to interaction (17), which is in accordance with his earlier statement of practice for more efficient decision-making; while in China this approach is not easily accepted (19) because “somewhat he (the Chinese manager) lose face” (11). However, despite the conscious awareness of the different approach in the local context, Mr. L still adopts the direct approach in communication when dealing with Chinese people and maintains the same style of managerial behaviour. It seems that although the local context has a strong impact on the process of how decisions are made, some of the managerial behaviours in the decision-making process remain intact, such as the way of communication with local people.

In Company 1 the decision-making process seems to be restrained by the organisational context of equally distributed power and the need to maintain the power balance between two shareholders. All important decisions are made after a group “negotiation” process. The manager’s working values derived from their

background is in many ways opposite to the actual practice of decision-making, but there seems to be no other means to involve other people in the decision-making process. However, managerial behaviours, such as manner of communication, is more influenced by the manager's cultural background rather than the- local context.

Map 2: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 1

Please see Appendix for Map 2.

Narration of Map 2 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 2)

Map 2 depicts the decision-making process of conflict solving among subordinates. Mr. L observes that the “first reaction” of Mr. L's Chinese team members when they have conflict, is to “go to the Chinese management” of the joint venture (21), “they would not necessary(ily) solve problems (between) each other”. “They have difficulties to negotiate rules, new procedures” (28) and solve problem by themselves (22). The difficulty here seems to imply that for foreign managers, it takes a long time for the Chinese to work out new rules or procedures (69), but what if the explicit rules or procedure are not part of the working culture for local managers? The communication in a high-context culture, to a certain level, may not need words or texts. That is, the explicit procedure may not be needed for the Chinese managers' managerial activity (70).

Aside from the difficulty of solving problems independently, Mr. L comments that moreover, “the approval (of conflict solving) would come from the top management” (23). The interpretation of this statement may reflect two points: first, Chinese managers seem to have a strong respect for authority as evidenced by going to higher

management hierarchy (73), or the approval coming from the top management may give the managers a chance to avoid taking too much decision-making risk (64); second, it shows the lack of trust, not necessarily from these middle managers, but executive managers for the foreign managers in the joint venture (60). The clear line drawn between the two management bodies seems the dominant organisational context in the company.

As for the expatriate managers, Mr. L has from the beginning communicated “the first message that we (they) must be united”. They solve problems among themselves as Mr. L expressed it: “I tolerate disputes between us, but never never in front of the Chinese (and) it works very well”. There is a “daily meeting and we (they) discuss problems and issues” (24). Mr. L “tend more and more” to solve problems by himself (26) instead of involving his Chinese counterpart (278) despite the “bad reactions” from him (25), as this will produce results instead of arguments. One can interpret this as the manager’s need for efficient decision-making (61) derived from the work values of his original cultural background (72). Aside than the meeting the needs of efficiency, keeping the conflict of foreign managers to themselves serves the purpose of showing that they “are very close, and that we (they) work together on(in) the same direction”. This could be considered as an effort to retain power in the specific organisational context of the power balance and structure in the company.

Comparing the decision-making process of subordinates during conflict solving and promotion, one can see the different approaches that Mr. L takes. The latter decision is more restrained by the power structure of the company because promotion is the first and obvious means to maintain the power balance; while the former, with a

manifold nature, has some leeway for a more flexible decision-making practice. On more and more occasions Mr. L can avoid the “negotiation” type of decision-making.

Map 3: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 1

Please see Appendix for Map 3.

Narration of Map 3 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 3)

Map 3 describes the process used by Mr. L in dealing with conflict with his counterpart. As one of the company’s senior management, Mr. L tries to solve problems with his counterpart by himself (35) and seldom involves the German board of directors (36), since geographically “they are too far” away (39). There was one exceptional case in which he “was looking for some support” from the German board of directors and “put pressure” on both parties in the company’s management. He needed “the foreign party to put pressure to be tough in the requirement to the company, to send strong message of the dissatisfaction”. This helped to surface problems which were not known during the bi-annual board meetings (38). “Because if you only put pressure on the foreign management, and that when you meet during the twice per year the Chinese party who drinks with you, etc., everything is going well, and you are friendly with him because he is Chinese and you are German, so you don’t know how to end it. The message, do not pass”. The main reason Mr. L observes is that, in the company what you have been told may not be what has happened (32), “when a guy tells you the problem is solved, the problem may not be solved actually; or that he did something and actually he (has) (never) done very little, this kind of thing”. Mr. L mentioned that “at the beginning (expatriates have) to learn how to communicate with the Chinese”, which leads to the topic of

communication in context (80), overcoming the barriers of communication in different contexts (31). However, it may again be trust issues (56) between the two parties leading to unintended miscommunication.

In contrast to some of the statements in the same interview, Mr. L claims that he “do(es) differently (when) dealing with Chinese (40), (because) they are susceptible people (41), and I think (that I can) not to make them lose too much face” (42), therefore (I) cannot be “too direct” (58): “A little (direct), yes, but not too much. (So that I can) keep some motivation (59) (for them) to work with me”.

To summarise the data of Interview 1, organisational context seems to be one of the key factors affecting the decision-making process. Due to the joint venture’s equal-share structure, most important decisions are made by “consensus” which in fact means negotiation. Promotion becomes one of the important means to maintain the existing power balance in the company. Managers do not seem to be satisfied with the process but nonetheless accept it, because the acceptance by everyone is more important than the decision-making process. The manager’s working values such as the need for transparency and efficiency lead to some negative judgements of the decision-making activity and outcomes. The decision-making process itself has been restrained by the organisational context.

However, when it comes to less routine decision-making, such as solving conflict, organisational context interacts with other factors in the process. On more and more occasions the manager tries to exclude his Chinese counterpart in conflict solving, for the stated reason of efficiency, based on his work values. Yet the need to retain power

becomes the reason for him to exclude the Chinese manager when solving conflict, unlike in promotion decisions where the process and result is open. One particular contradiction may illustrate the complex relationship between the cultural background and decision-making process. Mr. L very consciously notices that decision-making activities are under a local context, however, he still adopts the same managerial behaviour of direct communication as he would do with French or German managers, which is not easily accepted in the local context in China. The contradiction, furthermore, is shown in the use of direct communication with managers at different levels. For the sake of his Chinese counterpart, the General Manager, Mr. L takes a less direct approach in order to give “face” and keep colleagues motivated.

4.5 Interview 2

Introduction:

Company two is a totally foreign owned company in the electrical products industry. Its parent company is a large multi-national enterprise based in France. The company in China includes a headquarters, two manufacturing plants, and five representative offices, with a total of over 1,500 employees. The interviewee, Mr. B, is a middle level manager; he is the head of a sales team of 80 people including regional sales managers. All of them are Chinese.

Cognitive maps and narration:

Map 4: Complete map of the decision process for promotion – interview 2

Please see Appendix for Map 4.

Narration of Map 4 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 4)

Map 4 is a representation of the decision-making process for promotion in Company 2. The first step of the process is to identify the qualified candidates. Mr. B asks “the direct manager of these people to make a proposal” for candidates (1). This is “because I (he) have (has) to give this power to (the) regional (sales) managers” (2), this could give motivation (41) to the direct managers of the teams, just like Mr. B stated: “so they have the power to tell these people (that) if you are good I can promote you”. It can also ensure a smooth implementation after the decision has been made (41). The process of promotion is then followed by the agreement of at least three people: Mr. B himself, the Vice-manager of sales, and the human resources manager (16). This triple level checking process ensures adherence to the company’s “transparency rule” in the promotion process (4), because Mr. B observes that his Chinese managers tend to “promote friends” (5); that this personal relationship, i.e. “guanxi” (13), plays a very important role in the process of promotion in China (6). Mr. B thinks that this tendency towards “friendship” decision-making does not fit with the principle of transparency that he holds from his original working values. However, Mr. B observes that the Chinese managers “would very easily go the Chinese way”, that is, develop “guanxi” in business relationships (13). Despite the importance of “guanxi” in the local context, Mr. B thinks that it is not effective in a fast developing and competitive market (14), “because guanxi business can only work when you are in a market that developing (is growing) 20% each year, but when you will be in the competitive market where you need to be better than the

others, guanxi (is) not sufficient”. However, he still notes the need “to first understand and then to adapt” to the new culture (8) and translate his values “into Chinese way of thinking” (7). Nevertheless, to reduce the effect of “guanxi” on the transparency of the decision-making process, he establishes a matrix cross-checking management system in China instead of the pyramid management hierarchy in France (12). This means that all activities and results of each team / team members are double checked by managers in different regions as well as in different product sectors for the purpose of the promotion decision-making process. The matrix system is illustrated below in Table 7.

Table 7: Matrix Management System by Mr. B – Interview 2

Regional Managers Product Managers	Region 1	Region 2	Region 3	Region 4
Product 1	Team 1	Team2	Team 3	Team 4
Product 2	Team 5	Team 6	Team 7	Team 8
Product 3	Team 9	Team 10	Team 11	Team 12
Product 4	Team 13	Team 14	Team 15	Team 16

During similar decisions for promotion in France, Mr. B decides with the HR manager only, since there are no regional managers in the pyramid management structure in France (9/11). “..... in Europe, basic(al)ly you don’t need to have these bosses, why? Because you base your management on sharing the culture and common sense. We share the same value, same culture, same background, (and) same education” (10). This may be interpreted as the reflections of personnel from a mature company with an existing organisational culture (43). But Mr. B appears to have simplified the situation in France and assumes that the team

members share a certain level of tacit knowledge in the organisation because they share the same cultural values. -As China is a much bigger country it is reasonable and necessary to have regional managers who cover sales activities in different locations (70). The French company itself has a top down pyramid management structure, which may reflect the respect for hierarchy in France (49) which is similar in China.

The difference is introduced by the French manager in the Chinese context, who perceives that the solution to his cultural “problem” is to employ subordinate managers in a multi-checking group decision-making process for promotion in the company in China. This is driven by his work value – ensuring transparency and preventing the local context of “guanxi” which leads to the tendency to promote “friends”. According to him, “guanxi” has a negative effect on a transparent decision-making process, therefore he has transformed the management system from a pyramid hierarchy system in France to a matrix cross-checking system in China. This minimises the input of the practice of “guanxi” network by multi-checking and approval of promotion decisions. Mr. B recognises the need to “understand and adapt” the “new” culture, and it seems the main reason for him to choose the multi-checking group decision-making process, although this understanding of the culture leads to avoidance of the local context.

Comparing this case of decision-making of promotion in China and in France, the initial proposal of candidates comes from the direct manager for motivation and implementation of the decisions. In both countries a group decision-making process is adopted, however for different reasons and context. In appearance the only difference

in decision-making is the number of managers making decisions. This can be put down to the management systems in both countries having fundamental differences. There are no regional managers in the French pyramid hierarchy management system. Mr. B states that shared knowledge of team members makes it unnecessary; however, geographical factors may also contribute to this fact since France has a smaller geographical size compared to China, where regional managers could be critical to cover the vast sales areas. Mr. B has transformed the French management system from pyramid hierarchy to a matrix cross-checking system in China, the main purpose is to minimise the effect of the local context in order to ensure the transparency of decision-making process. Decision-making behaviour is driven by the working value from his original culture and education, to overcome the “negative” effect of the local context. The perceived clash between original culture and local context lead to novel changes in management system, although the decision-making process seems remain similar.

Map 5: Complete map of decision process conflict of subordinates – interview 2

Please see Appendix for Map 5.

Narration of Map 5 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 5)

Map 5 shows the decision-making process of Mr. B when there are conflicts among his subordinate managers or team members. He expects his managers at the same level to avoid having conflict in the first place, “it’s quite difficult (when) people have a conflict, so the first mission I give them in the job is not to have conflict”. Nevertheless there are other conflicts which he has to deal with from people of different management levels. To preserve these he takes a step by step approach.

His first step is “ruling like in the army (15), the sergeant is always right, the soldiers is (are) always wrong”. The manager higher in the management hierarchy always gets the vote at the initial stage. Mr. B argues that “the discipline should be respected. Perhaps you will lose one soldier, (or) two soldiers, you should not lose discipline or value” (18). His understanding of Chinese management hierarchy is that the manager is above the team (22), which is in contrast with the situation in France (20) that the manager is in the centre of the team (21). “this is the way it cannot work in Europe. You cannot manage in this way in Europe. You have to reason (with) everybody, you have to be in the centre of the organisation, not above the organisation”. It seems that the Chinese have more respect for the hierarchy in management system (24), although he mentioned in the same interview that the French management is very hierarchical compared to what has been developed in China, the matrix management system. The understanding of hierarchy seems to have different meanings and perspectives from the two different cultures. Mr. B notices that in “state-owned” companies, as well as companies from other Asian countries such as Japan, the management style is “bossy” (27) and only process is respected (28) but not people. However, it is possible that in China the respect is more to the authority rather than to the process compared Japanese management style (54).

However the decision-making process is not finished in this step. After the initial judgement, Mr. B asks other managers to “make an inquiry” for him on the issue (17), double checking in order to maintain the confidence of the team members. “..... if somebody is asking for help and he (the manager in question) is hiding the information, using his power (then) I (the manager) should have other ways to be able to listen to these guys without letting him lose the face before I decide he’s

wrong”. The double checking process helps to keep the confidence of employees (19) and ensure the motivation and implementation after the decision is made (51).

Then the conflict is always discussed and solved one to one, “never in a group” (25). This is mainly to maintain the face for the higher position manager involved (23) especially when he or she is judged being in the wrong. Mr. B finds that “not losing face” is very important to Chinese managers, “especially when they are together”. However, he emphasised that “this is not Chinese, this is international”, “a French man is as big as the face of a Chinese man” (26). From Mr. B’s perspective there is similarity here in China and in France. The questions are, is the meaning of “losing face” the same with his understanding as a Chinese manager? Is there any relationship between this issue and the managers’ position as he observes (i.e. above the team in China vs. in the centre of the team in France)? What is interesting is that one year later after he started to work in China, he hired a Chinese manager from Hong Kong as his “Chinese face” (37). Because he “will not be successful business man in China (40), because business in China has to be done by Chinese today (38) (when it is in the building business phase of this country” (74). Mr. B thinks that this is because China now is only in the business phase of building up business and economy. In other words, China is not a mature market at the present stage (75). However, it may also indicate that there is barrier of entry (77), either explicit or implicit, for foreign managers to conduct business and managerial activities in China.

In comparing what Chinese managers do when making similar decisions, Mr. B observes that it actually depends which type of companies they are coming from. He gave an example of managers from “state-owned” companies, his understanding for

them is that “they don’t care about the people they only care about respecting process”. The question is, is it process that’s been respected or rather the authority in the management hierarchy?

To solve conflict between subordinates, Mr. B uses an individual decision-making process with input from other managers. This is in contrast with the promotion decision-making process depicted in Map 4, which is the group decision-making process. Nevertheless, in both cases Mr. B takes a different approach for making decisions from what he used to doing in France. In the promotion process the decisions are made in a group with managers from a newly established matrix management system to minimise the effect of local context, which is perceived as the antithesis of Mr. B’s original working value. In conflict situations among subordinated, Mr. B uses a combined process which could be contributed again by both the local context and his original working beliefs. Mr. B recognises the necessity to understand and adopt the local culture, and he has come up with what he thinks is the most suitable way of making such decisions in China. However, his action and behaviour is based on his perceived understanding of the local culture, which may be a very different perception to that understood and practiced by local personnel. What is worth noting is that after one year of working in China, Mr. B hired a Chinese manager to be his “Chinese face”, because he recognised that business in China has to be done by Chinese, at least for the present stage.

Map 6: Complete map of decision process conflict with same level managers – interview 2

Please see Appendix for Map 6.

Narration of Map 6 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 6)

Map 6 depicts the decision-making process of conflict solving when Mr. B has problems with same level managers in other departments. He takes the initiative for solving conflicts either in France or in China (29/30), although the explicit reason he gives is different. In China he does this because it can give “face” to the other manager(s) involved (31), because “most of the time conflicts with Chinese managers are coming from “face” problems” (35). The question is, like Mr. B mentioned previously, what about the French managers’ needs of not losing face? Mr. B provides an explanation that his personal training and education which (32) “make a clear separation between business life and real (personal) life” (33). This comes from his educational and cultural background (66/67). “I have been trained in the French way to make a clear separation between business life and real life”. He seems to suggest that professional training and separation from personal life to business life can be a solution to “face” saving issues.

Contrary to this belief, he observed that the “Chinese mix everything” (34), because “guanxi” is a very important (39) local context (68), which he perceives as harmful to business relations (78) if there is conflict in private life (36). “So because we can separate business life from normal life, this is a strength. The Chinese mix everything, this is the problem. Even if you are on the private life of conflict, it will injure the business relation”. He judges a foreign local phenomenon based on his own educational and cultural background, despite that this phenomenon seems to work in this particular local context.

Unlike the previous two decision-making process, in dealing with colleagues at his level, Mr. B sees fit to keep the same decision-making practice in France. He takes initiative to solve problems and the behaviour happens to fit well with the local context. By bringing conversation to the other manager, he gives “face” to him / her. This may be the very reason that he makes this type of decision using a different method from the previous ones.

4.6 Interview 3

Introduction:

The interviewee Mr. M works as a consultant for a department of local government in China, whose job is to promote local economic development by attracting foreign investment. He had worked as a senior manager in 2 large multi-national French companies in China for 12 years before starting this job after his retirement. The initial purpose of the interview with him, as with all other managers, was to talk about decision-making and get relevant data for this research. However, the discussion of the interview was solely about the foreign investment in the area, despite the effort to change the direction of discussion.

Although the data from this interview is not much related to decision-making therefore not much useful in the present stage of data analysis, the interviewee did offer some interesting point of views and experience about a foreign managers working in China. Some of the data may be of use later in the discussion chapter.

4.7 Interview 4

Introduction:

The company is a Sino-French joint venture in the automobile industry, producing specialized heavy industrial vehicles. The French shareholder is a small company with about 50 employees. The Chinese shareholder company was supposed to be a collective-owned company, however during the course of the interview, it appeared to be more like a private owned company with a family based management system. The decision-making process in this case may be related to the different context compared to other enterprises. The interviewee Mr. P is a young Chinese-speaking manager from France. He was responsible for the coordination of vehicle building projects between the French company and the joint venture in China. He had only worked for the company for a few months in France before he started the role in the joint venture one year ago. Because of this, he did not have much experience in decisions made for promotion and conflict between subordinates, so the interview concentrated on discussions about decision-making in solving conflicts with his same level managers.

Cognitive maps and narration:

Map 7: Complete map of decision process conflict with same level managers – interview 4

Please see Appendix for Map 7.

Narration of Map 7 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 7)

Map 7 depicts the conflict solving decision-making in Company 4. Mr. P notices that managers in his French company take a more direct approach in solving conflict (1), which is usually through face to face interactions. “First of all to (reach) the required person, and if we cannot resolve the problem we can organise some meetings (2) and decide what to do”. Other than stating that “this is the French way (or rather) European way”, he speculates that the situation of the company is the main reason: it is a small company with 50 employees, a flat hierarchical management structure with no detailed departments (3): “(the) company has not different departments, very directly from the manager to the sales manager to employee, this employee can be (working in) commercial or purchase, or (to) workshop but very directly”. The access to managers for each other is very straightforward. In the Chinese joint venture the context, as well as the practice are totally different. First of all, its management hierarchy is established on a family basis (6). In China the concept of family has a larger scope, which includes both the immediate family members, as well as the family members of the next kin for example, or kin by marriage. Authority is mixed both in the family and in the company and the complexity of the relationship in management may confuse anyone from outside the family, not to mention someone from outside the country. Secondly, the joint venture has a more detailed department system for different business and management functions (8) so one department manager cannot make a decision on a problem in another department (7). Therefore if one person from this chain of relationships is missing it could take long to make certain decisions. Mr. P has to push very hard to have some decisions made at the absence of one or two department managers (9) because the other managers refuse to take in charge (10). He thinks that this reflects the lack of responsibility (11) of Chinese managers, however, it may indicate two

other characteristics of these managers: the respect for authority (19) and the avoidance of taking risks (20). Thirdly, he finds that his Chinese colleagues avoid direct talks in solving conflict (13), which for him is not efficient because it takes longer to make decisions (16). The talks among managers are mostly explanations to the situation of conflict and problems (14) instead of developing solutions, which is far more important from his point of view (15). This of course, may indicate that Chinese managers try to avoid face to face conflict by taking indirect approach, however, it may also indicate that the solution may be communicated through the talking around of situations and problems which Mr. P might not realise.

4.8 Interview 5

Introduction:

This Sino-American SME⁴ joint venture for handicraft products is located in a medium sized city in China. Although the investment is from America, this company is run by French management because the artistic design and technology are from France. French personnel are responsible from artistic designs to technical and manufacturing procedures. End-users are also in France and other European countries. The interviewee Mr. H is the Artistic Director who has worked in China for 13 years. His wife, who is a Chinese, works as a manager in the company and acts as his interpreter as well.

Cognitive maps and narration:

⁴ Small and medium sized Enterprise.

Map 8: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 5

Please see Appendix for Map 8.

Narration of Map 8 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in the map 8)

Map 8 demonstrates the process when Mr. H makes promotion decisions. He would first identify possible candidates by himself from past experience (1). “It is the accumulated experience to identify (the) people”. This first step could be categorised as personal factor of the manager (47). The decision however, is made with the input from other managers (3) because “it is a choice that have to make carefully” (6), as “in (the) company the promotion is very rare” (4). The process helps with decision implementation if there is competition in the promotion process (48). Mr. H gives two reasons for the rare promotion opportunities in the company, first of all, “there are not many people in the management hierarchy” because of the company and the industry context (46), that is, a small company of “handicraft workshop” rather than an “industry” (8). Most of the employees work in different positions in the manufacturing process. Secondly, the workforce is relatively stable in this company, “staff stays in the company” (5). The managers, once they were hired from the beginning, usually stay for long time even after a long absence for example like maternity leave, they would want to return to the company.

For similar decisions in France, Mr. H “in fact do(es) the same” (9). The French model of management is “borrowed” into the Chinese company because the products export to Europe and “they don’t accept (any changes) if there is any difference in technique or product”. The assumption here seems to be that the same management

system can satisfy “certain requirement to the product” (43). Mr. H finds no “need to change the way of working and making decisions” in China (12) because he was “surprised when ... first arrive in China, (by) the people’s ability and comprehension to absorb the technical requirement rapidly” and by “how fast people can adapt and learn”(11). “They even work extra hours so it’s very fast for them to learn everything” (14). Furthermore, he finds that it is easier to work in China because of the more stable workforce in this industry compare to in France (5).

Map 9: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 5

Please see Appendix for Map 9.

Narration of Map 9 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 9)

The process for solving conflict among subordinates in Company 5 is demonstrated by Map 9. The decision process for solving conflicts of the team members bears little difference for Mr. H either in China or in France (17). In the joint venture he first talks with the involved persons individually (15) to hear “both sides of the story” and get the right details (16), because truth and lies are easier to distinguish (25) when avoiding face to face dispute of reasons in the conflicts (24). This seems quite different from the previous interviews discussed, that Chinese managers usually avoid fact to face conflict (58). The next step in the process is to meet with both sides together and make decisions (22). In this way he can avoid the risk of “mix(ing) everything together” (23). He gives his reasoning for the same decision-making practice in both countries as the same management model (20) due to the structure of the industry of handicraft workshop (19). “This structure of the industry has decided the management model in this company”. The only difference he emphasises is that in

France it is more difficult (21) to solve the conflict when it comes down to firing one of the people involved in the conflict, because of more explicit and less flexible employment law and regulation (18).

Map 10: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 5

Please see Appendix for Map 10.

Narration of Map 10 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 10)

Map 10 is the graphical representation of Mr. H's observations on the decision-making process among same level managers in his company. The Chinese employees "very often would come to the (supervising) managers to solve conflict" (26). However if the nature of the conflict (60) is different, the initial approach of the team members is different too: work related conflict (27) comes to the manager faster than "if it is something personal", which "they would try to deal by themselves" (28). He observes more differences between Chinese and French in their attitudes toward interpersonal relationship of working and personal matters. Chinese tend to mix work with their personal lives (29), which in one hand makes people more close to each other (38) and able to take care of each other (39); but on the other hand, managers tend to waste more time in their work on personal relationships issues (40) since they feel "obliged to solve small problems" of personal nature (41). Moreover, it may get in the way of work because when a Chinese manager does not like someone, he or she would tend to find more problems of this person's work (33). The importance of the relationship (31) in China embodied in the fact that it comes first before work (32). This is different (30), if not totally the opposite, from the practice in France because first, the intention is to avoid mix work with personal life (34), and secondly, even the

mix happens, it is usually hidden (35); while in China it seems so natural, and the level is much higher than that in France (38).

4.9 Interview 6

Introduction

This company is the Chinese branch of a large French international company in the light industry sector. It is a fast growing company with annual growth of 60% to 80%, and it successfully integrated two more local and international companies in 2004-2005. There are a total of approximately 8000 employees with about 20 expatriates from France and other countries. The headquarters where the interviewee Mr. F works comprises about 600 people, of which are managers, including 15 expatriates. Mr. F is the Director of Operations and Administration, and has worked in the Chinese subsidiary for 4 years.

Cognitive maps and narration:

Map 11: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 6

Please see Appendix for Map 11.

Narration of Map 11 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 11)

Map 11 represents graphically the decision-making process for promotion in Company 6. Mr. F states that the promotion process “is not so scientific, (it is) more (based on) personal feelings shared by (other) managers” (7). This is

first of all “share (the) responsibility of nomination” (9), but more importantly, the promoted person has to work with others (8) and “involve people in the decision (making) make them accept the decision” (10). This is especially in the case where the position needed for promotion is under the authority of one of his subordinate managers, where Mr. F gives the power of final decision to the lower level managers (18). He observes that it is quite difficult to impose his own opinion to his managers in case of promotion because they want to keep their independence as a manager (19) by making the decision of promoting one person from his/her team. However, he finds that in France, it is much easier to “impose (his) point of view” (20) of the candidates for promotion. Less job opportunities in labour market in France does not give much alternative (21) for people to say no to their boss. While the labour market in the Chinese city where the Chinese subsidiary situated is mobile and less stable (149), and many opportunities occur constantly for experienced managers, “favourable to employees”.

Mr. F comments the Human Resources management as a “big challenge” ((3) in his company in China. As a fast growing company (1) there are needs to fill different positions(17) often. These are mostly “external recruitment” (11) since it needs long time for training (16) before qualified to be promoted. The mobile labour market (149) in China also makes it possible to find experienced managers from external sources. The working environment requires the integration of managers from different culture and background (2). The company’s policy is to plan internal promotion in advance (4/5), however, due to the rapid growth (1) of the company many positions need to be filled in a very short spread of time (17). In contrast to the situation, in France promotion is mainly internal (15) due to the slower growth of the business (13).

Map 12: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 6

Please see Appendix for Map 12.

Narration of Map 12 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 12)

Map 12 presents a graphic representation of decision-making process when there is conflict among Mr. F's subordinate managers. He finds that they will try to solve problems between themselves by themselves (29). Only if they find no resolution will they go to him (22). He states that "very often people in China say that they have no willingness to take (make) decisions, and taking some risk to take (make) decisions. In fact, they do, they do definitely". The managers prefer to take the risk of making decisions in order to preserve independence and power (28), "they are ready to take the risk to preserve the independence". Mr. F observes that "guanxi" is the main reason why these managers are unable to solve these problems by themselves. It implies that they have not enough "guanxi" (30) and therefore "not powerful enough" (31). Only when they cannot find compromise that the problems will presented to Mr. F (22). He has to negotiate with the managers involved separately (23) since it is difficult to obtain compromises using face to face discussions (53). In the meetings afterward Mr. F acts as the messenger of the solution (54) to both sides.

The decision-making process for conflict between subordinates in France is similar to those in China, except that the problems are quicker to the managers (25). The difference, which "is surprising" to Mr. F, is that the French managers "more and more rely(ing) on (the) decision of the boss" (26). He observes that it seems more

hierarchical (27) in the French company than in the Chinese one, which is “surprising” to him again when making this reflection in the interview. However, Mr. F also emphasizes that personal characteristics (38) also play a role in making decisions for conflict.

Map 13: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 6

Please see Appendix for Map 13.

Narration of Map 13 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 13)

Map 13 depicts the decision-making process when Mr. F has conflict with his same level managers in the company. He always goes first to the other manager for solving problems (59). He positions himself as internal service provider (39) therefore it is normal for him to take initiative in solving problems. Another reason is, he finds that this gives “face” (35) to the other manager if he makes the first move, and it is a chance to “achieve compromise” (37). He has “no face so (he) do(es)n’t care”. The straightforward attitude of French managers for Mr. F is common practice (40) in France, no face problem involved (61) in who goes to whom first.

Mr. F observes that when his Chinese colleagues have problem with him they try to solve it through network (34), which means to ask someone who knows someone who knows someone and finally reach him to let him know that there is a problem. They “try to avoid face to face” discussion and confrontation (32). In the circumstance when they cannot avoid face to face discussion, like when Mr. F goes for solving problems, they will disguise problems (36) by pretending that there is no problem, or

they don't know about something which is related to the problem therefore everything will be fine.

4.10 Interview 7

Introduction

The interviewee Mrs. A is a Chinese speaking academic and manager works now in a French post-graduate business school. She worked in companies China and with Chinese for 10 years until 2002. Most her experience comes from SMEs⁵.

Map 14: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 7

Please see Appendix for Map 14.

Narration of Map 14 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 14)

Map 14 depicts in graphic Mrs. A's accounts about decision-making process for promotion in her experience. Mrs. A first talks about the promotion process in French companies in the interview. There is usually an "annual interview (1) for employee it's time for them to apply (for promotion)". She thinks that they are quite "unilateral decisions (3) sometimes they might ask the opinion of other managers (22) but most of (the) time just the(ir) own opinion about the employee" (23). She emphasized that her experience comes from small and medium sized companies (4). In the Chinese companies the decisions for promotion are "individual decision" (7) too, only that "in China it's more evident that decisions are linked with quality of

⁵ Small and Medium Enterprises

relationship” (24). However she thinks that “it’s the case in France also (26), but hidden by formal rules and procedures” (27). In France “it’s much more procedural and much more based on the process (5); in China”, other than the quality of personal relationships, “it’s much more based on the results” (6). However, if the company context is different, for example, joint ventures companies, decision is made differently (28). “..... decisions have to be taken (made) with local partner” (29).

Map 15: Complete map of decision for conflict with same level manager – interview 7

Please see Appendix for Map 15.

Narration of Map 15 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 15)

Map 15 gives a graphic representation of decision-making process for solving conflict with equivalent-level managers adopted by Mrs. A. She tends to be open and straightforward (8) when she has problems with other managers. She will try to solve the conflict first with the person (10) and go to the boss as the last resort (11) if the conflict still exists. She thinks that her decision-making style is more due to the personal characteristics (9) than any other factors. As for the Chinese managers in the similar situation, Mrs. A observes that “when two people have conflict, it’s very difficult to know” (13). In this case the problems last longer because “they don’t speak very openly about the problem” (14). “Usually you discover several months after that because they have a conflict they act in such and such way” (15). During the conflict however, managers find ways to “sustain activity” (16) although it “lasts longer” (17). It indicates that indirect approach these Chinese managers adopt for

conflict solving decision-making also reflects the difficulty for a foreign manager to understand the situation and communication in a different context.

4.11 Interview 8

Introduction

Company 8 is a subsidiary of a French industrial group in China. The subsidiary itself is a small organisation with just 24 employees. The interviewee Mr. S is the General Manager of the subsidiary company in China and has worked there for nearly 9 years: 4 years in Hong Kong, and 5 years in Mainland China.

Cognitive maps and narrations:

Map 16: Complete map of decisions for promotion – Interview 8

Please see Appendix for Map 16.

Narration of Map 16 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 16)

Map 16 provides a graphic description of the company's promotion procedures. Company 8 is a small (1) subsidiary company with 24 employees, “..... in such a small structure there are not a lot of opportunities for promotion (2).....” This has become “a problem” for Mr. S “because when you have high potential people (3) if you are not able to offer them possibilities for future promotion they will leave the company”. He thinks that “people are asking for recognition (e)specially local people working for foreign company” (4). It is Mr. S the

manager who makes the initial proposal for promotion (5), “decide to increase the salary and to (make) the title much more in line with what she is doing”. However he needs a “green light from the headquarters” (6) first before the promotion. He has to convince the headquarters to “increase the salary” (7). The reasons he use are “..... to fend off competition (8)” in the labour market, because “if you want to keep your key employees, you have to be proactive (before) the competitors come and take them away”.

Before coming to work in China, Mr. S was in a management position for nearly 20 years in France. He thinks that that there are “fewer opportunities out there” (11) in the mature economies like in “Europe, France”, “people (employees) enter in (this) job and stay (in this) for many years” (10). Unlike in China, promotion is “not a tool that (the companies) use on a continuous basis” (12). The difference is that “here (in China) after 2 (or) 3 years they expect something” (9). However, due to the company is “still in the evolution phase” (13), the promotion is dealt in “case by case” basis (14).

Map 17: Complete map of decision for conflict among subordinates – Interview 8

Please see Appendix for Map 17.

Narration of Map 17 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 17)

Mr. S’s observation of his subordinates’ conflict decision-making activities is graphically organised in Map 17. The type of problem (20), organisation culture (21) and individual characteristic (19) all contribute to the decision-making process. Persons involve in conflict first engage in face-to-face discussion (15/17), but

eventually they “will come to me (Mr. S) anyway” (16). Mr. S then talks with persons involved individually (36), and have a meeting together with them (37). The difference with Chinese managers is that “they don’t talk (to) each other” (18). The manager needs to “talk individually with each of them and then decide afterwards what to do” (39).

Besides the observation of decision-making methods, Mr. S also points out that the organisation is one of the factors in conflict situations. “..... when the structure is clear, when the strategy is clear (22), there is little conflicts (23).” But “when there are changes coming (24) then the conflicts starts”. The underlining reason for this is that “everyone wants to protect himself and grab opportunities” (25) and leads to more conflict situations.

4.12 Interview 9

Company 9 is a very large subsidiary of a French light industry multi international company. The group has two subsidiaries in China, one is controlled by the mother company in which the interviewee Mr. C works, and the other is a Chinese company acquired by the group after it enters Chinese market. The direct subsidiary company has about 2,400 employees in total. The interviewee Mr. C is the Marketing Director who has worked in China for over 4 years. He is one of the three expatriates from France in this subsidiary.

Cognitive maps and narrations:

Map 18: Complete map of decisions for promotion – Interview 9

Please see Appendix for Map 18.

Narration of Map 18 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 18)

Map 18 graphically illustrates the decision-making process of promotion in Company 9. The process starts from group input from the candidate's managers (1), peers (2) and subordinates (7). Mr. C does not "rely on (his) own judgement (5), (but) from all around the party (which) means all the senior (managers) in the company from other departments especially (in) HR or functions which are very close (to the marketing department)." He also "take(s) advice from peers (of the candidate)" to find out "how he (is) perceived" (4), and "take(s) feedback from the subordinates to see how the subordinates had perceive(d) (as) the boss" (8). However, the final decision is an individual one. Mr. C as a manager is "going to decide the promotion at the end" (3). The whole process needs to ensure "fair promotion" (6) with "a long evaluation (9), not something we do in one or two days, (but) something which take(s) months. it's very important to keep the collation of the team at the end (of the process) not to create unfair feelings" (10).

Promotion is a long process because first of all, it needs to be done in a fair way to keep the motivation of the team (6); secondly, it takes time for one to "raise (gain) marketing experience" (14) before the candidate is promoted; thirdly, there is not many opportunities for promotion in the company (15); and last, Mr. C is "not sure that even after 4 years I fully understood the Chinese way" (16). "[In China it's clear that it's difficult to have real truth of what people are thinking even when they are close]" (17).

Mr. C acknowledges that he should be the one who adapt to Chinese way of management (56). However, when he compares the decision-making process in these two countries, he sees “no difference” in the practice (11), because “we (French managers) control the company and manage the company (13), and are on the (same) culture (12)”.

Map 19: Complete map of decision for conflict among subordinates – Interview 9

Please see Appendix for Map 19.

Narration of Map 19 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 19)

Map 19 graphically represents the decision-making process of Mr. C when his team of managers have a conflict. He observes that “they try to arrange in a quiet (and) discreet way” (18), but “quite rapidly” the problem come to him (19). However, Mr. C finds it “difficult to solve” the conflict (20) because he is “not sure (that) (he) understand the whole story (21). “..... therefore (he) maybe only (get) part of the conflict solved (22) and something can come back after (23)”. As a result he relies “on Chinese people to solve conflict (24) who have better chance to understand really where (what) is the problem (instead of) the surface of the problem” (25). Mr. C decides to stay out of the local culture and delegate the problem solving to managers who understand the context better than himself.

From his point of view, it “is tougher to solve conflict here (in China) than in France” (26). As people “are in the same structure of the same company (27), it’s quite easy to know what has happened. (by) talking with people (28)”. Compare to French

managers, Chinese “don’t do it (talk) directly (29, 30). They deal with conflict by “dance around” the problem (31). Mr C says that he “is (from) the culture of (a) very rational (one), (for example) between two points the shorter distance is straight (33)”. However in China “it’s not the same way, it’s more the philosophy of Confucius (34), multi approach, and one plus one may(be) equals four, And it’s not necessary wrong or right (35), it can be wrong one day and right the day after”. Mr. C explicitly admits that the cultural context in which he works is very different from the one he comes from, and almost incomprehensible for him. Instead of trying to understand and adapt to the local culture, he prefers to keep a distance and rely more on local employees.

Map 20: Complete map of decision for conflict with same level manager – interview 9

Please see Appendix for Map 20.

Narration of Map 20 (numbers in brackets correspond to those in Map 20)

Map 20 shows the decision-making process of Mr. C when he has conflict with his same level managers. His fellow managers are from different countries, but they “share the same culture of management” (36). They adopt a very “open” approach in solving conflicts (37), “everyone express the opinion one by one” and try to deal with problems. There are regular meetings with “multi-functional teams” (38) and everyone has chances to express oneself (41). They “take time to involve people (42) because they need to feel (that) they are the boss of their own company (43)”. The involvement makes it easier to “find the consensus” between departments when it comes to decision implementation (44). Mr. C observes that although “in appearance” the hierarchy in China is much respected, however in reality the level of independence

from the boss is higher than it appears. Not involving people may cause problems in the later stage and lead to passive and inactive attitude towards decision implementation (48).

Mr. C thinks that there is less team work in France (39). People works in smaller groups (40) and implementation of decisions is much easier (47) because it seems there are “more respect”. The need for “express oneself in a disciplined way” (46) is less at the stage of implementation.

4.13 Summary

This chapter presented an introduction of how the data is organised and analysed. The interview transcripts are colour coded then converted into cognitive maps. The purpose of this process is to pull out all relevant information on decision-making styles from the interview texts, and presents them into a visual graphic form that depicts the managers' decision-making process and the rational as why the decisions were made in certain styles.

Drawing on the maps and the text, the narratives of each decision tells a story of how an individual manager made different type of decisions in different circumstances and cultural settings.

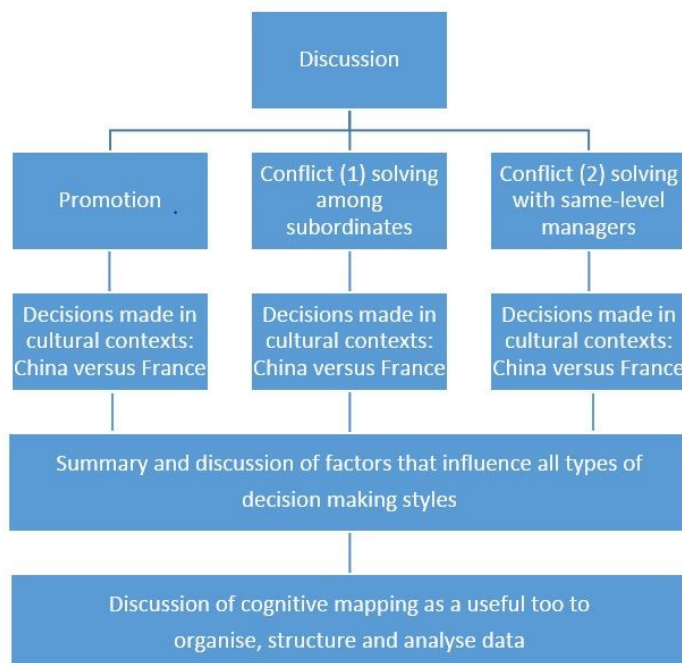
The next chapter is part two of the data analysis. It will focus on the interpretation and discussion of the maps and the narratives.

Chapter Five Data Analysis (2) Interpretation

5.1 Introduction

In this chapter there will be further discussion and interpretation of the managers' decision-making process, based on the data presented in Chapter 4 (refer to Diagram 2 in Chapter 4). The discussion will be categorised by each decision-type, with discussion of the different cultural contexts in which the decisions are made. Furthermore, different factors that influence all three types of decisions are discussed, and we will demonstrate how cognitive mapping can be a sound methodology for organising and structuring data.

Diagram 3: Discussion Structure



As shown in Diagram 3, the discussion will be divided into three categories of managers' decisions: promotion, conflict solving among subordinates, and conflict solving with same-level managers. It introduces the decision-making process, and focuses on the factors involved in the process that are revealed in each interview and cognitive map. The processes, factors, and comparisons will be illustrated, with discussions based on the whole or parts of the original maps in Chapter Four, which are relevant to the decision-making process. The managers' reasoning for the chosen decision-making process will be closely inspected, and the factors that contribute to the managers' decision-making process will be examined, interpreted, and discussed. The chapter will end with a discussion of the research question – can cognitive mapping be a useful tool to organise and structure data, and to help with data analysis?

Discussion of each category of the decision-making style starts with a detailed discussion of each interview, comparing the decision for promotion in China, and in France. The purpose is to lay a foundation for the later discussion on all the factors in all decision-making styles. The partial maps are presented below each discussion for ease of reference.

After the detailed discussion, a summary of the factors that influence all types of decision-making styles will be presented and discussed; and the chapter ends with a discussion of the researcher's reflection on how the cognitive mapping can help with the data analysis.

5.2 Decisions for promotion

Group decision-making is the dominant style for decisions for promotion. The various forms of group decision-making include consensus decisions, consultation from other managers before making decisions, or empower team leaders to make decision after consultation from other people. Relevant factors that contribute to the choice of decision-making methods include company context; value held by the manager; motivation and implementation of decisions; local context; personal factor; labour factor; industry context; and risk taking.

There is one case that the decisions for promotion are made unilaterally. The interviewee identifies that company context – small company with flat structure – is the main contributor to the choice of individual decision-making style.

5.2.1 Promotion in Interview 1

In Interview 1 all decisions regarding promotion are negotiated until both investors of the company reach an agreement, which means that group decision-making is the only method for making decisions. The main contributor to this decision-making process is the company context, both investors have equal share in the company therefore they require to share the power together in balance.

What happens in China?

Group decision-making was used in Company 1 for important decisions including those for promotion. All decisions for promotion had to be agreed in consensus through negotiation between Chinese and French managers (103/106). That is, if one

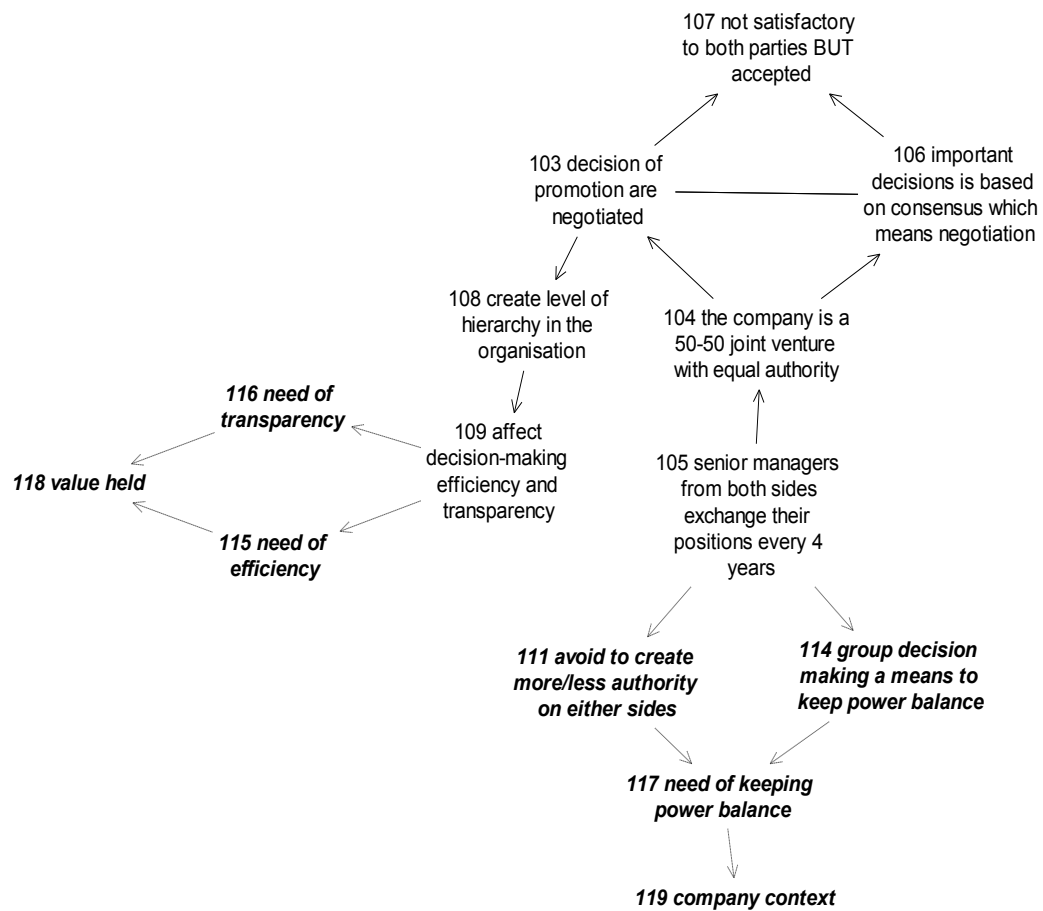
side wants to promote someone, the other side usually got to promote someone else to keep a balance.

There is one main factor that contributed to this particular decision-making process: the company context. Company 1 is a joint venture with equally distributed share and authority (104). The decision-making process concentrates mainly on keeping power balance (114) for both shareholders through managers appointed by each side. The main concern of the managers and shareholders is to avoid creating unbalanced authority (111) on either side.

There is, however, another factor appeared in the thinking process of the French interviewee. The manager was sure that this existing decision-making process created more levels in the management hierarchy (108) than that needed, and it affected the decision-making efficiency and transparency. Clearly this is against the manager's work related value that decision-making process should ensure the efficiency and transparency (109). Nevertheless, he had to accept the consensus/negotiation process of the decision-making due to the company context.

The manager's native culture and work value plays an important role in the process, but the company context of keeping power balance is the main drive for managers to

adapt the consensus / negotiation style of decision-making.



What is different in France?

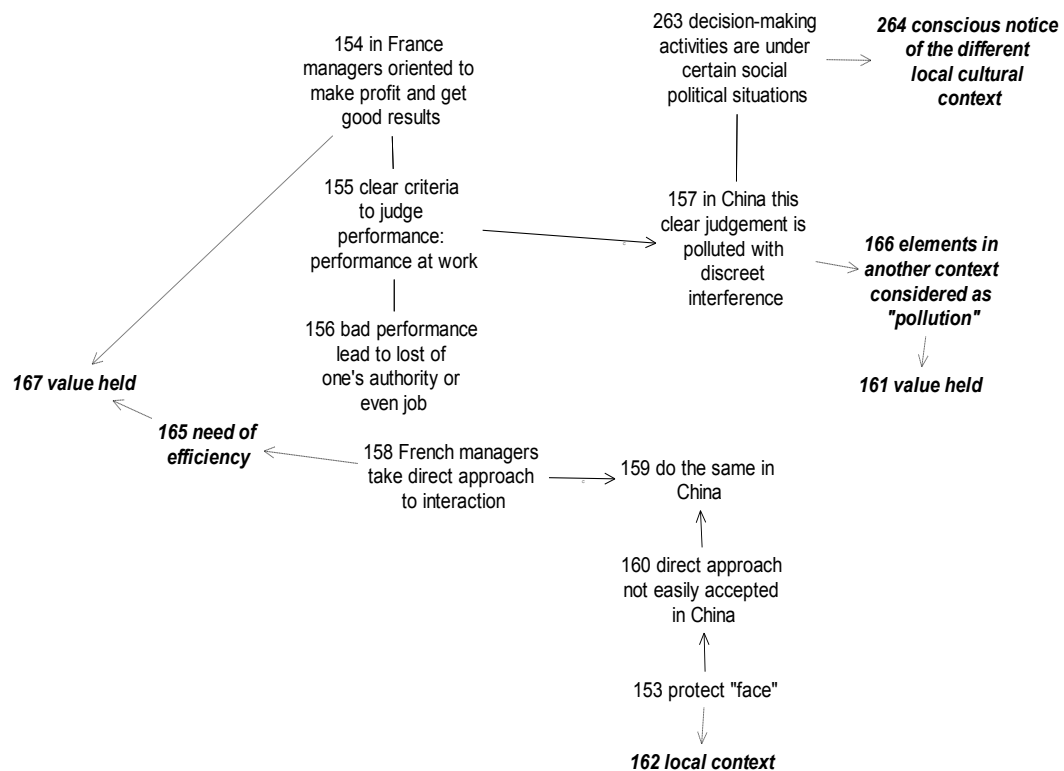
The manager did not make direct comparison on the decision-making process itself, however, he did provide information about some different practice on managerial decision-making in these two countries.

The first difference is the criteria which judge the performance of managers. The interviewee commented that in France there are clear criteria to measure the performance at work, that is, to make profit and get good results (155); however in China, it is mixed up with other interference (157) such as long term personal relationships.

The French manager is well aware of the cultural difference between the two countries. However, he judged the local culture based on the value of his native culture and deemed a very important and complex local phenomenon (Guanxi) as “pollution”. This can be a demonstration of how powerful one’s native culture and value could be in the thinking process of the person. The influence of home cultural background may not be able to change the decision-making process in the whole practice as demonstrated in this interview, however, if the manager believes that his work value is the “correct” one, he would consciously or unconsciously insert his opinion and influence the decision-making process. The second comparison below is a good demonstration to this argument.

The second comparison was on the approaches of interaction for decision-making between French and Chinese manager. The interviewee reckons that the French managers take direct approach in interaction of decision-making (158), which is not easily accepted in China (160). This is especially true when it is necessary to point out the shortcomings of a manager. The direct approach may cause this person to lose “face” (153). Yet despite the conscious awareness of the behaviour is not easily accepted in local culture, the manager still preferred to adapt the direct approach (159)

when dealing with the Chinese managers.



5.2.2 Promotion in Interview 2

Group decision-making process is also the main way of making promotion decisions in Interview 2. The difference here is that the decisions are made by managers with relevant functions such as a line manager, deputy or HR manager. The purpose is to ensure transparency of the decision-making process to defy the local context of “guanxi”.

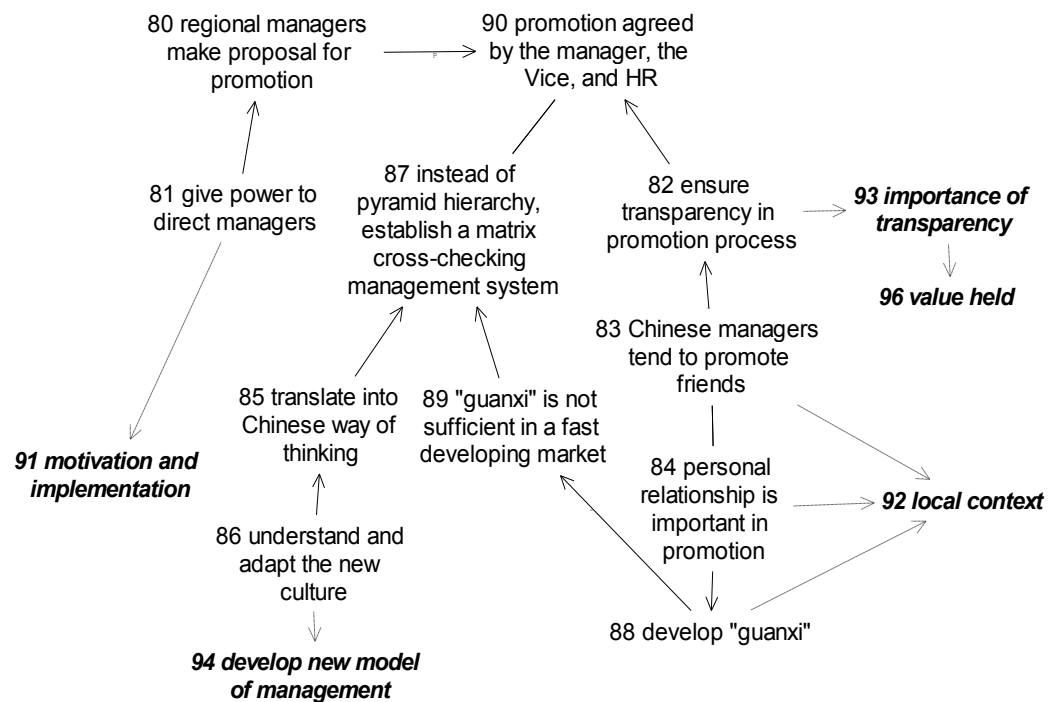
What happens in China?

In Company 2, which is a French subsidiary operating in China, group decision-making process is used for promotion. A group of managers with different functions are involved in the process of promotion and the final decision is made with three of these managers together in consensus (90).

There are three major factors that contribute to the decision process: managers' work values, local cultural context, and ensure motivation for the team leader and implementation of the decision (91). The group decision-making process for promotion is a cross-checking management system that triple checks the final decision for promotion. This system is developed by the manager based on his work values of ensuring transparency in the promotion process (82), and the determination to stop the local context of "guanxi" (88) plays any role in the process. In this interview the manager's own cultural background is clearly one of the most important factors that influence the decision-making process.

What is worth noting is that the manager tries to development a more complex cross-checking management system for his team (Refer to Table 7 in Chapter 4). He claims that it is based on his understanding and the effort to adapt the local culture, however, the decision seems more based on the lack of understanding, or lack of willingness to

understand the local context.

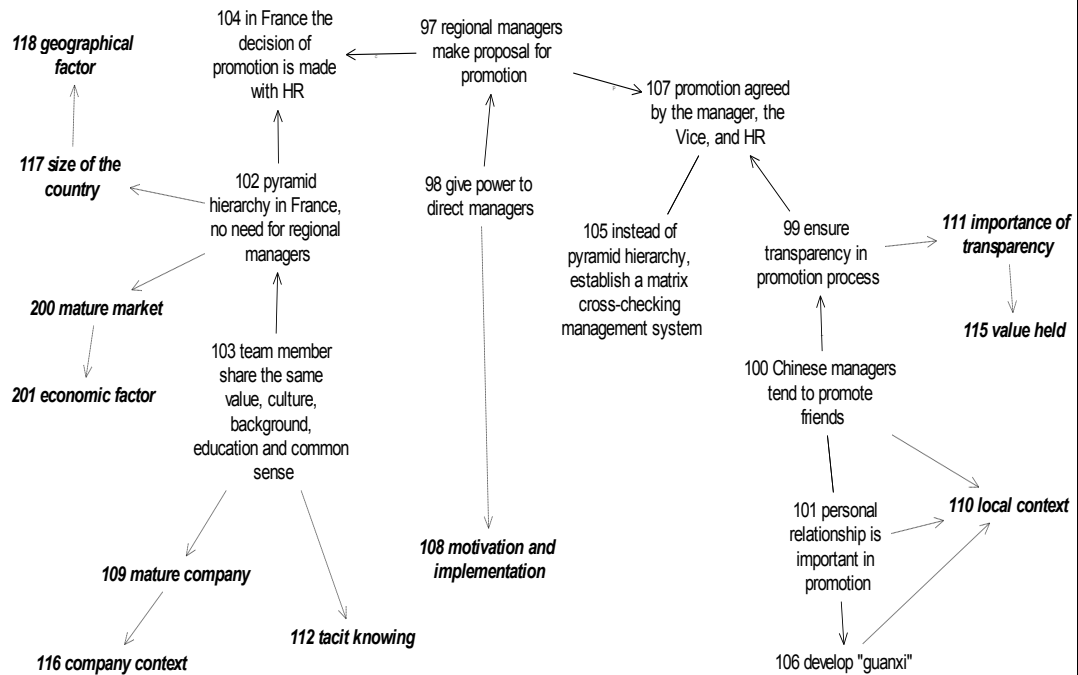


What is different in France?

Comparing the Chinese and French companies in decision-making for promotion, the decisions are made with and by groups of managers in both countries, but the difference is the number of people involved, because of the different management system.

The manager developed a matrix management system in China to replace the simpler pyramid (102) one in France. He justifies the change with geographical (117), economical (113) and cultural (103) reasons, however, the main purpose of the more complex system is to triple check the decisions he makes in another culture context. It

makes one wonder if the lack of understanding of the local culture is a deeper reason for this change. If so, it contradicts the manager's claim of trying to understand and adapt the local culture, which the manager himself may not be aware consciously.

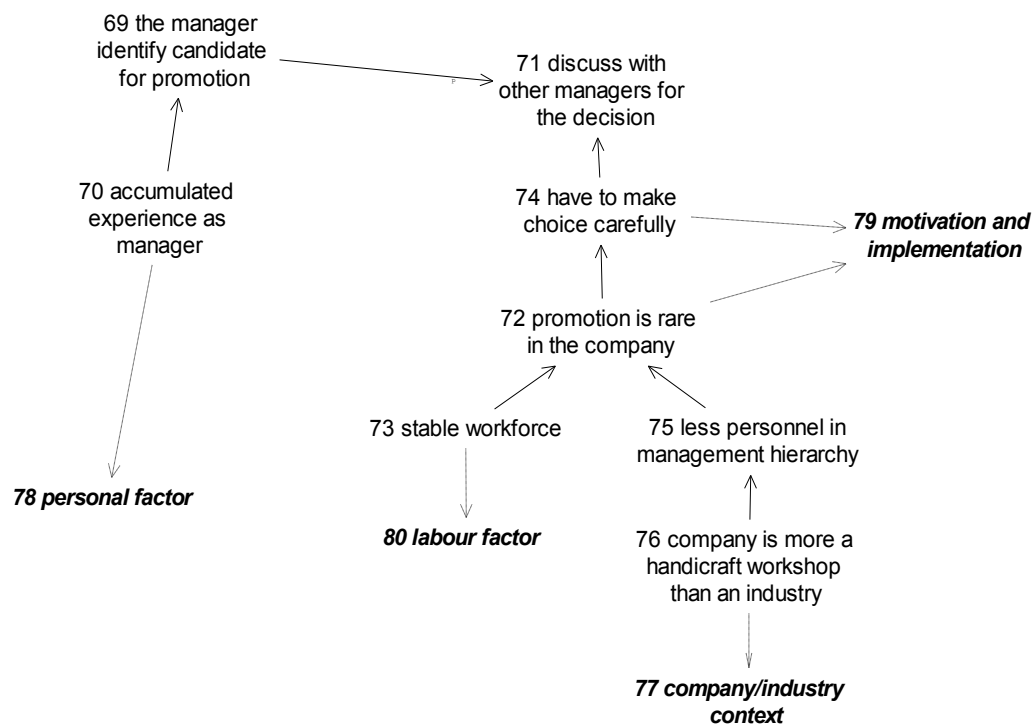


5.2.3 Promotion in Interview 5

Similar to the above two interviews, decisions regarding promotion are discussed and decided by a group of managers in Interview 5. However the reason behind is yet different again. Due to the stable workforce and nature of the company, promotion is rare in the company; therefore the choice has to be made very carefully.

What happens in China?

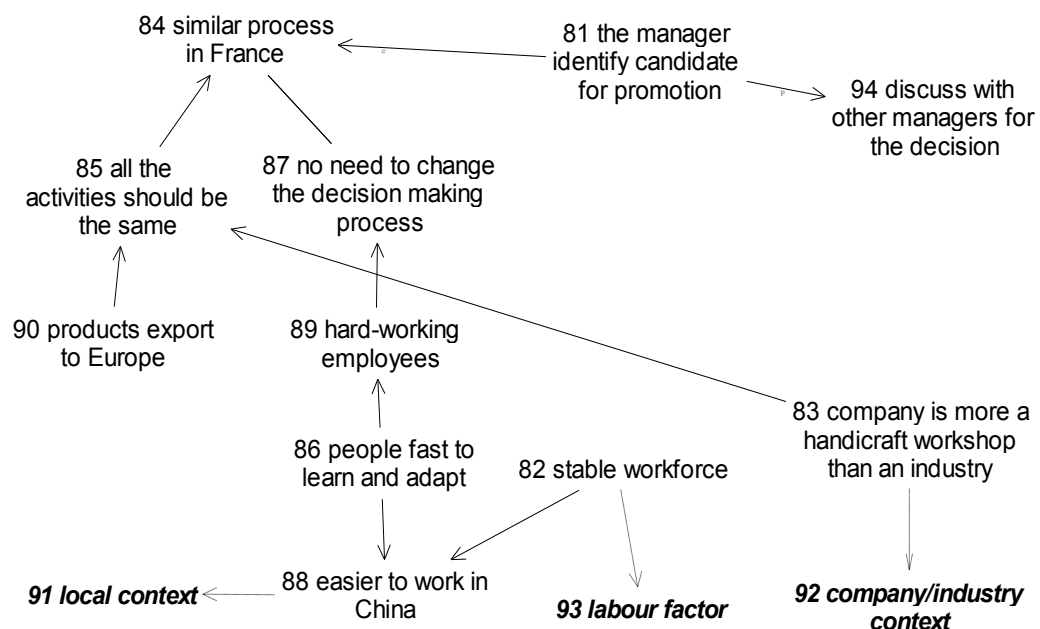
The decisions of promotion in Company 5 are made individually (69) by the French manager with input from other managers (71). Therefore the process is individual decision-making with group input. Four factors are involved in the reasoning of the manager's account for the process. Manager's personal factor (78) of accumulated experience (70) is the reason for him to make the decision individually, however, the other three considerations – labour factor (80) of stable labour force (73), company / industry factor (77) of handicraft workshop (76), and consideration of decision implementation (79) – contribute to the group element in the process.



What is different in France?

Looking at the promotion decision-making process and the manager's reasoning in China and in France, the French manager borrows the French model of management

and uses it in China, and similar decision-making process is adopted in promotion. He finds that there is no need “to change the way of working and making decisions” because of three factors: first, the local context of easier working environment, fast-learning employees; second, labour factor of stable labour force; and third, company / industry context. However, he also emphasised that the similarity is because that the products are exporting to Europe therefore management should be the same to produce products with no difference.



5.2.4 Promotion in Interview 6

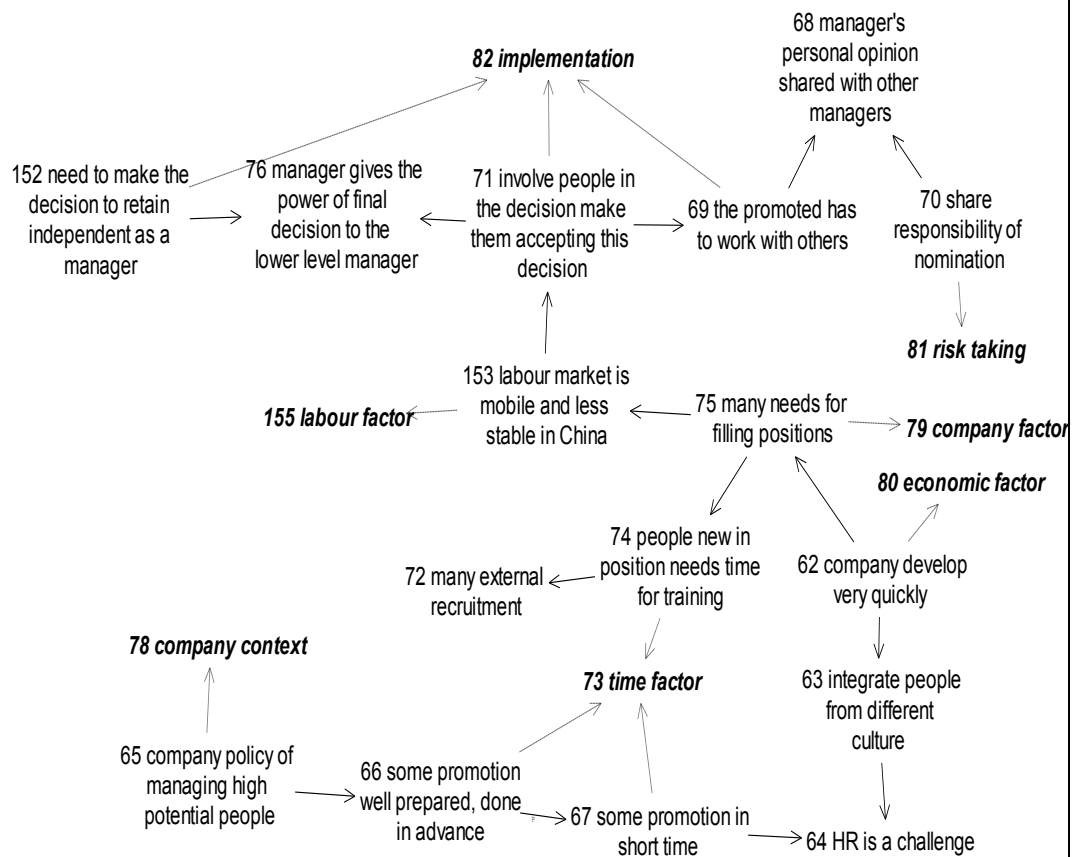
In Interview 6, although decisions over promotion are done again by a group of managers, the final decision will be given to the lower level managers who are the immediate line manager for the promoted person. This is mainly to ensure smooth

implementation after the promotion is made. To share the responsibility is another reason contributing to the decision process.

What happens in China?

The French manager chose group decision-making process (68) for promotion in Company 6, first to share the responsibility of nomination (70); and secondly, for a smooth implementation of the decision afterwards as promoted person has to work with others. He observes that the labour market in China is very mobile and the employee team in a company is less stable (153). To empower those direct managers in the promotion process therefore fulfil the need to make decisions so as to retain

independent (152).

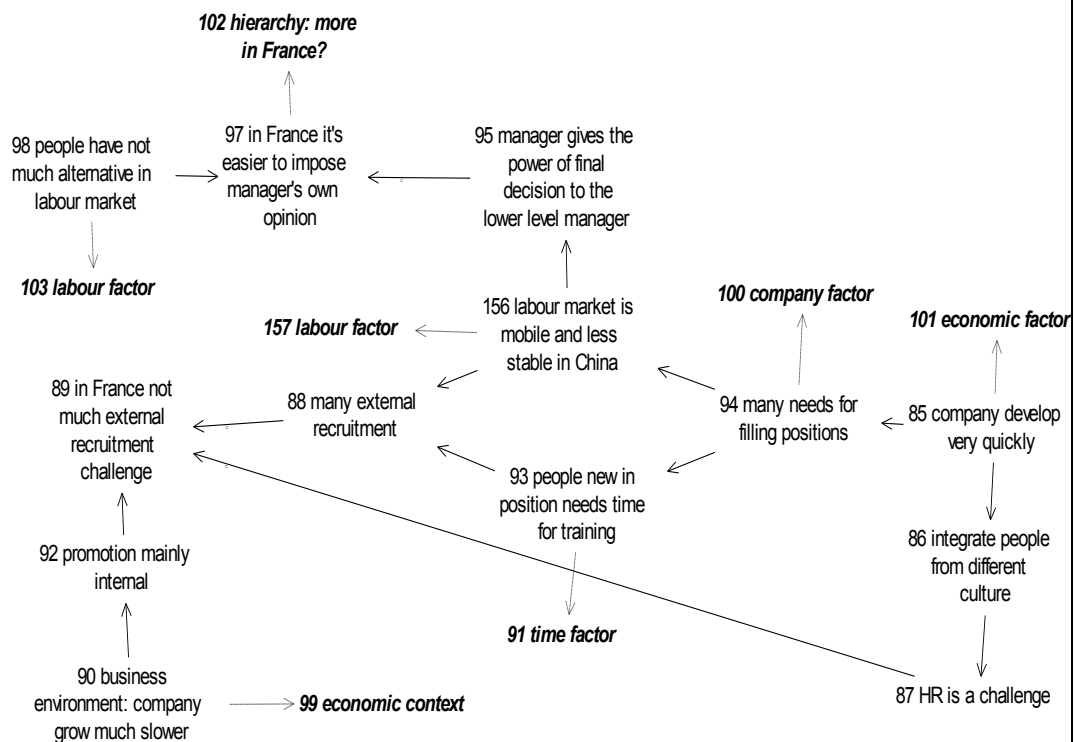


What is different in France?

The French manager makes two major comparisons between China and France. First, with group decision-making process used in both companies, he finds it easier to impose his opinion on promotion in France (97) because people have not much alternative in labour market (98). However, in China he prefers to give the power of final decision to the direct line manager (95). The mobile labour market (156) gives experienced manager many opportunities of alternative jobs if he/she has different

opinions on candidates. Here it seems that the labour market factor in France cause more hierarchical management in the French company.

The second comparison lies on the internal versus external recruitment. Chinese market for the company, as well as the subsidiary itself are both growing very fast (85). This creates many new positions to be filled in (94), in addition to the fact that personnel in each position need time for training (93), therefore external recruitment (88) becomes the main source of employees rather than internal. Under these circumstances the Human Resources management is a big challenge (87) because people from different national and organisational culture need to be integrated in the same company (86). In the contrary, the company in France grows much slower (90) and promotion is mainly internal (92).

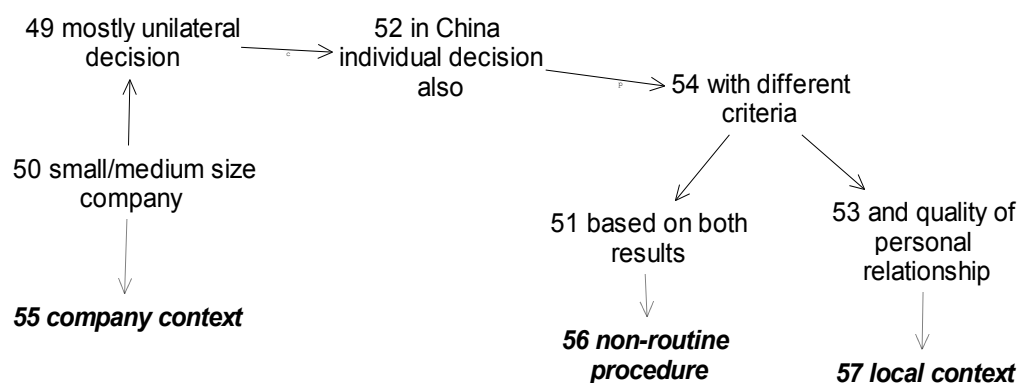


5.2.5 Promotion in Interview 7

Contrary to all of the cases above, promotions in company 7 are mostly decided unilaterally because it is a small / medium size company. The company context, nevertheless, is still a very important factor in the choice of decision-making process.

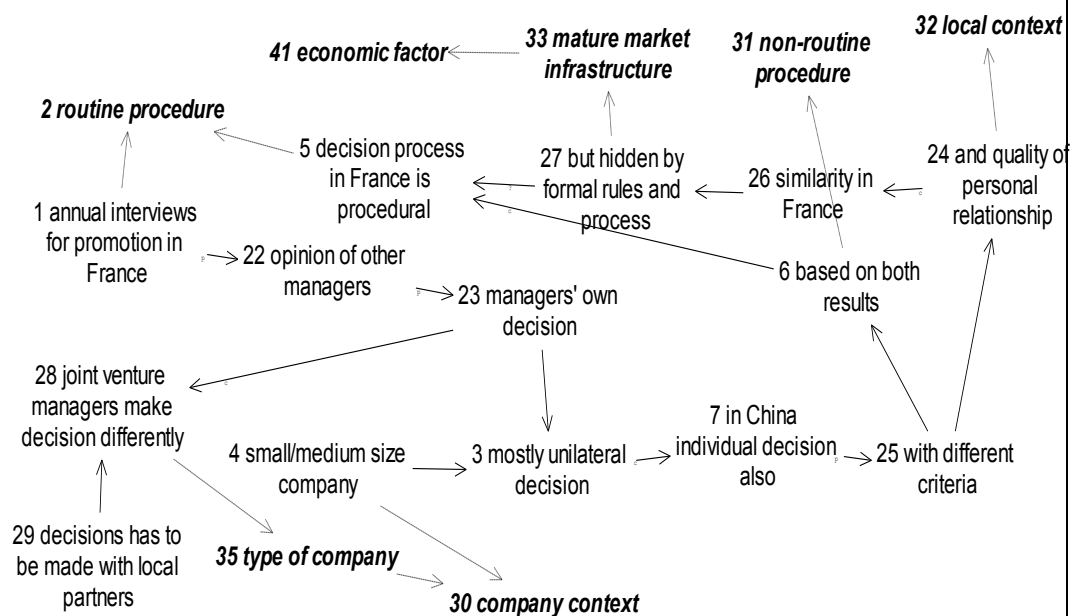
What happens in China?

In Company 7 in China the French manager thinks that individual decision is the usual process for promotion in the small and medium sized company. Other than the factor of the company size (50), local context of personal relationship (53) is an important criterion of promotion in the decision-making process, as well as performance results (51).



What is different in France?

Both in China and in France the usual decision-making process is individual decisions; however there are a few differences related to the process. To begin with, the criteria of promotion in China is based on results (6) and quality of personal relationship (24), while in France is more procedural (5), but hidden by formal rules and process (27); and last but not least, the difference in company context: in small and medium companies the decision for promotion is usually individual, but in joint ventures they need to be made with local partners (29).



5.2.6. Promotion in Interview 8

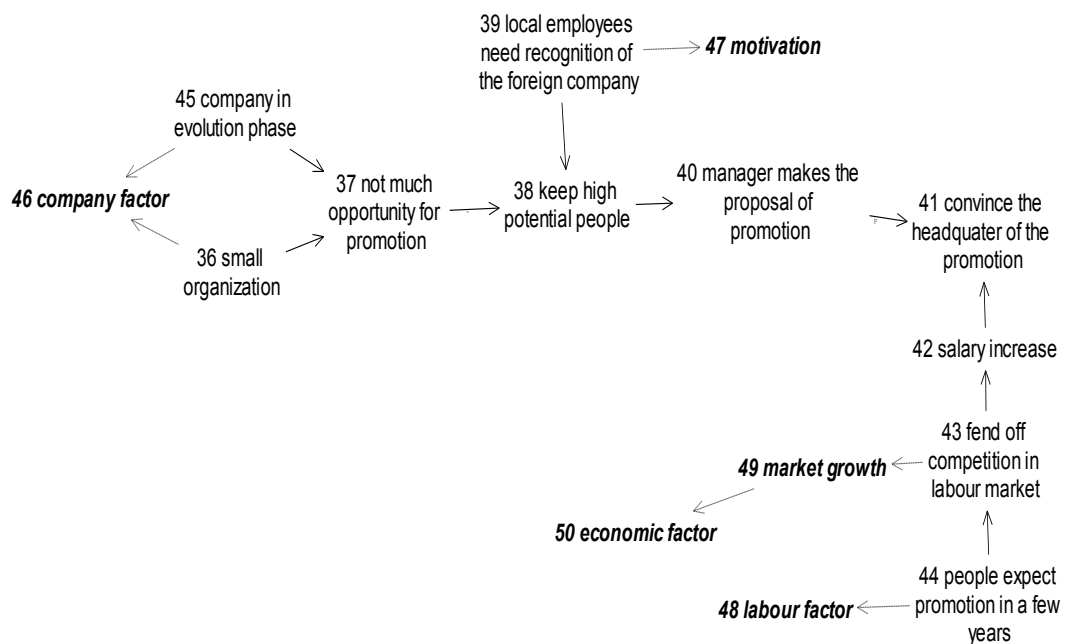
Company 8 is a subsidiary of a company in France, so the manager has to get approval from headquarters to promote anyone, mainly because of the salary increase. In this sense decision-making is done by a group decision process. However, inside

the subsidiary company the manager makes the decision individually because the company is small and there is not much opportunity for promotion.

What happens in China?

As a small company (36) in an “evolution phase” (45), there is not much opportunity for promotion (37) in Company 8. The procedure of promotion in the Chinese subsidiary is dealt with case by case basis due to mainly labour factor, that the labour market in China, especially a major city like Shanghai, is very competitive for both employees and employers, and local employees need to get certain recognition from the foreign company (39) in order to keep their motivation, and for the company to keep high potential people (38). The procedure of promotion is that the manager of the company makes proposal (40) for a promotion case, convince the headquarters to proceed with the promotion (41) and salary increase (42). The ultimate purpose is to fend off competition in a competitive labour market (43), where employees expect to be promoted in a few years (44). The process is influenced by company, labour,

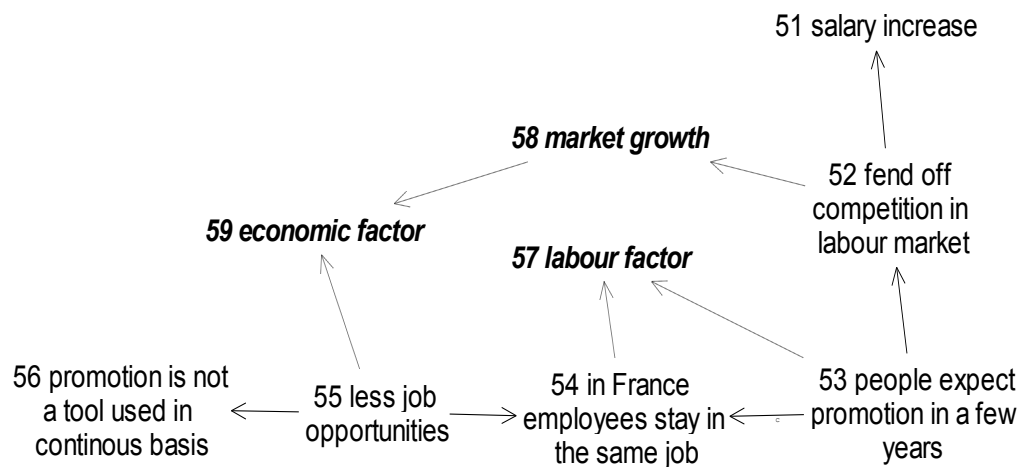
economic factors, as well as motivation factor.



What is different in France?

The manager states that France is a more mature market with less job opportunities (55), promotion is not a tool being used in continuous basis (56). Employees tend to stay in the same job (54) for longer period of time. On the contrary, in China after a few years, employees expect to be promoted (53), mainly because of the strong competition in the labour market. Promotion becomes a tool used to fend off

competition (52) and retain people with a high potential.



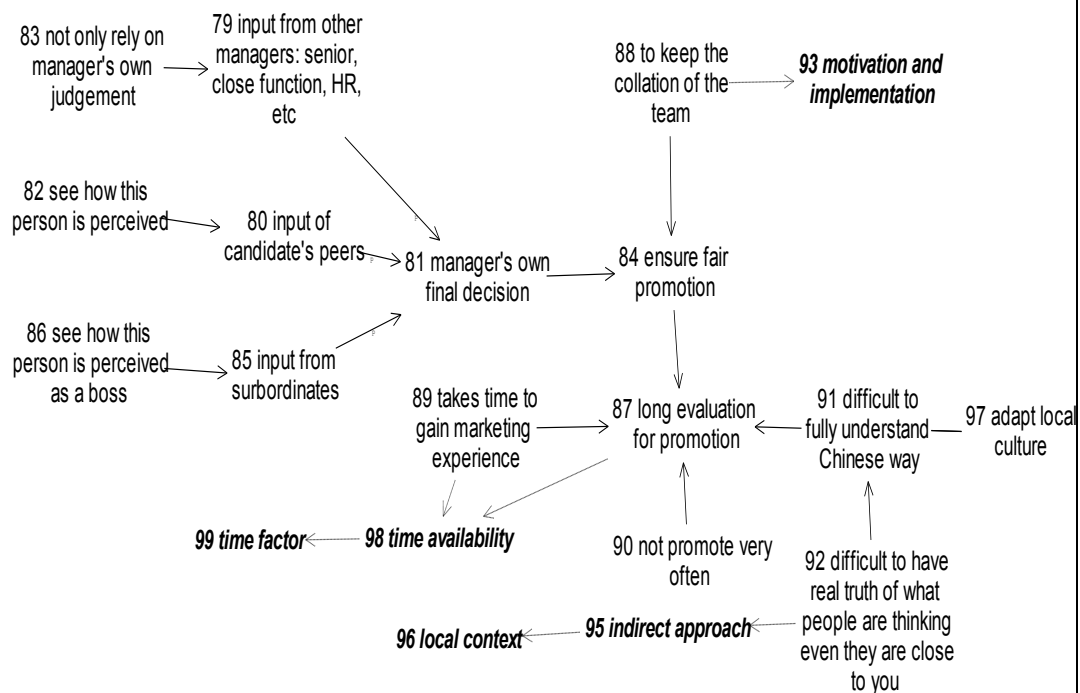
5.2.7 Promotion in Interview 9

In contrast to interview 8, the manager in company 9 adopted a more complicated process in decision-making for promotion. It involves a group of managers from the beginning of the process to the end to ensure the quality of the promotion as well as the implementation after the decisions are made.

What happens in China?

Individual decisions with large group input are used for decisions for promotions in the company in China. A group of managers in relevant departments contribute to the evaluation of the candidates (79, 80, 85), but the final decision will be made by the manager of the department (81).

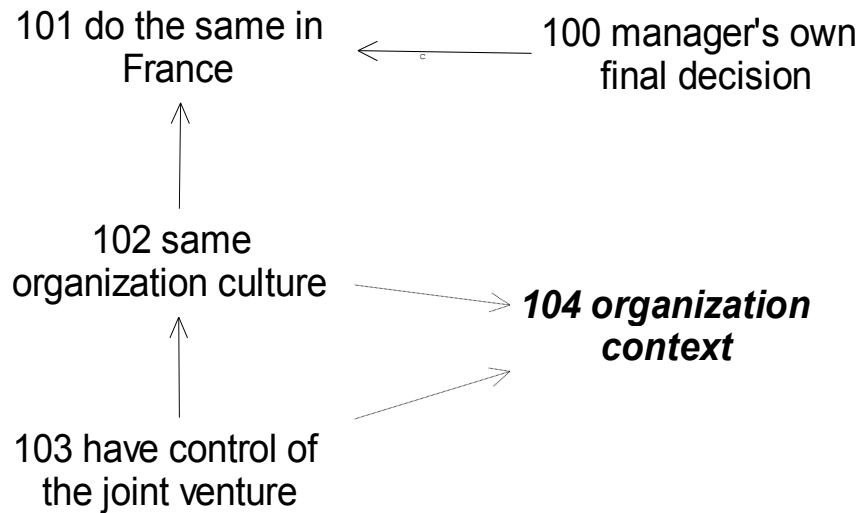
This is a long process because the promotion is not something happens very often in Company 9 and the managers would like to take the time (99) to ensure a fair evaluation process. Not fully understanding of the local context (96) is another factor that influences the decision-making process.



What is different in France?

The French manager confirms that there is no difference in how the decisions for promotions are made (101) in France. Since the Chinese company is a subsidiary joint venture of the French company, which not only ensure the control of the joint venture (103) but also makes it possible that the mother company's culture (102) spread into the subsidiary company. Therefore he contributes the similarity of the decision-

making process to the organisational factor (104).



5.3 Discussion of the decision process for conflict solving among subordinates

In half of the cases the managers use combined individual and group decision-making processes for solving conflict among subordinates. Local context and company context are the main factors that contribute to the choice of decision methods. In the rest of the cases the outcome is very similar: local context is the factor that prompts the managers to make individual decisions in solving conflict of their subordinates.

The following text in this section presents a detailed discussion of each interview for comparisons of the decisions of conflict solving with subordinates in China and in

France. The partial maps are presented below each discussion for ease of read and for reference.

5.3.1 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 1

The manager in Interview 1 tries to keep conflict of expat managers to themselves without involving the local managers. It is group decision-making but exclude certain group of managers in the process. The main reason for this is to retain power to the group that the managers belong, due to the company context of 50-50 shareholding from two different investors with equal power.

What happens in China?

In Company 1 the decision-making process in solving conflicts among subordinates is similar to the decisions for promotion, which is made by group decision-making (206). The manager reasoned that he needed to include his Chinese counterparts for decision-making for their subordinates' conflict solving, to avoid what he calls a "bad reactions" (207). The gesture of involvement would be perceived by the Chinese manager that he has been given "face" (215). Here the local context seems the decisive factor for adopting group decision-making process.

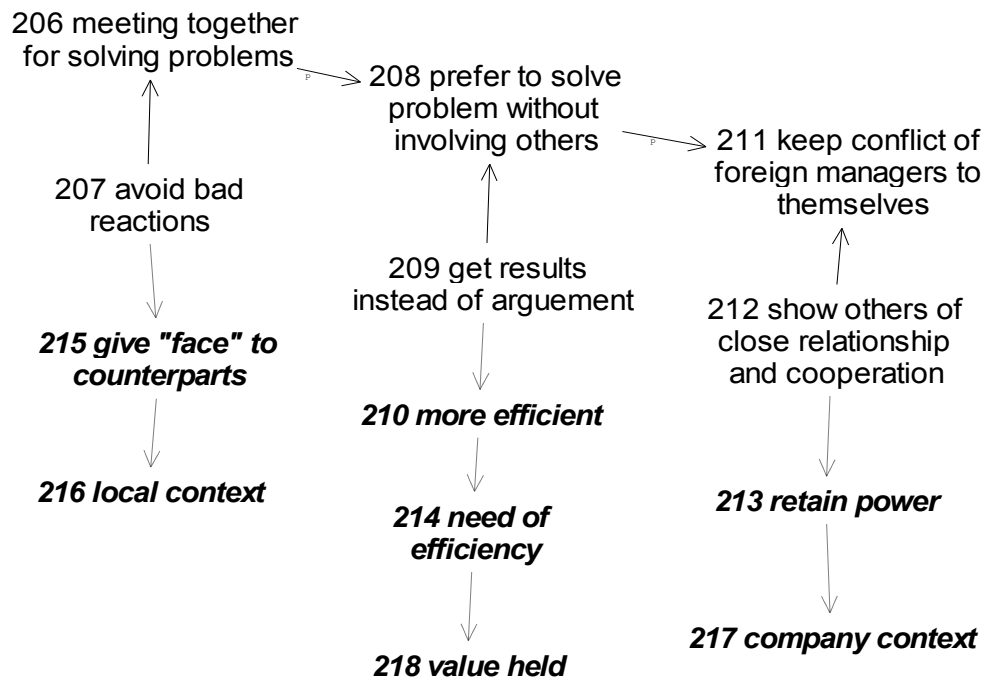
However, the manager made it very clear that he preferred to solve problem of conflict without involving managers from the other side of the shareholders (208), because he wanted to get results instead of arguments (209). The implication of his

preference is that the involvement of the other manager would make the whole decision process less efficient (210).

There is a similar pattern here compare to the decision process for promotion in the same company. The manager's working value of efficiency (214) again played a very important part in the thinking process, that it may alter the decision process whenever possible. Company context of power play, similarly, made variation to the decision-making process. The manager asked his French team member to keep conflict to themselves (211). He thought that by showing a close relationship among expats (212) they would be able to retain more power in the constant struggle of balancing power between the two shareholders in the company.

Map 2.2 below represents the manager's comparison of the process and practice in China and in France regarding the decision process for conflict solving among

subordinates in Company 1.



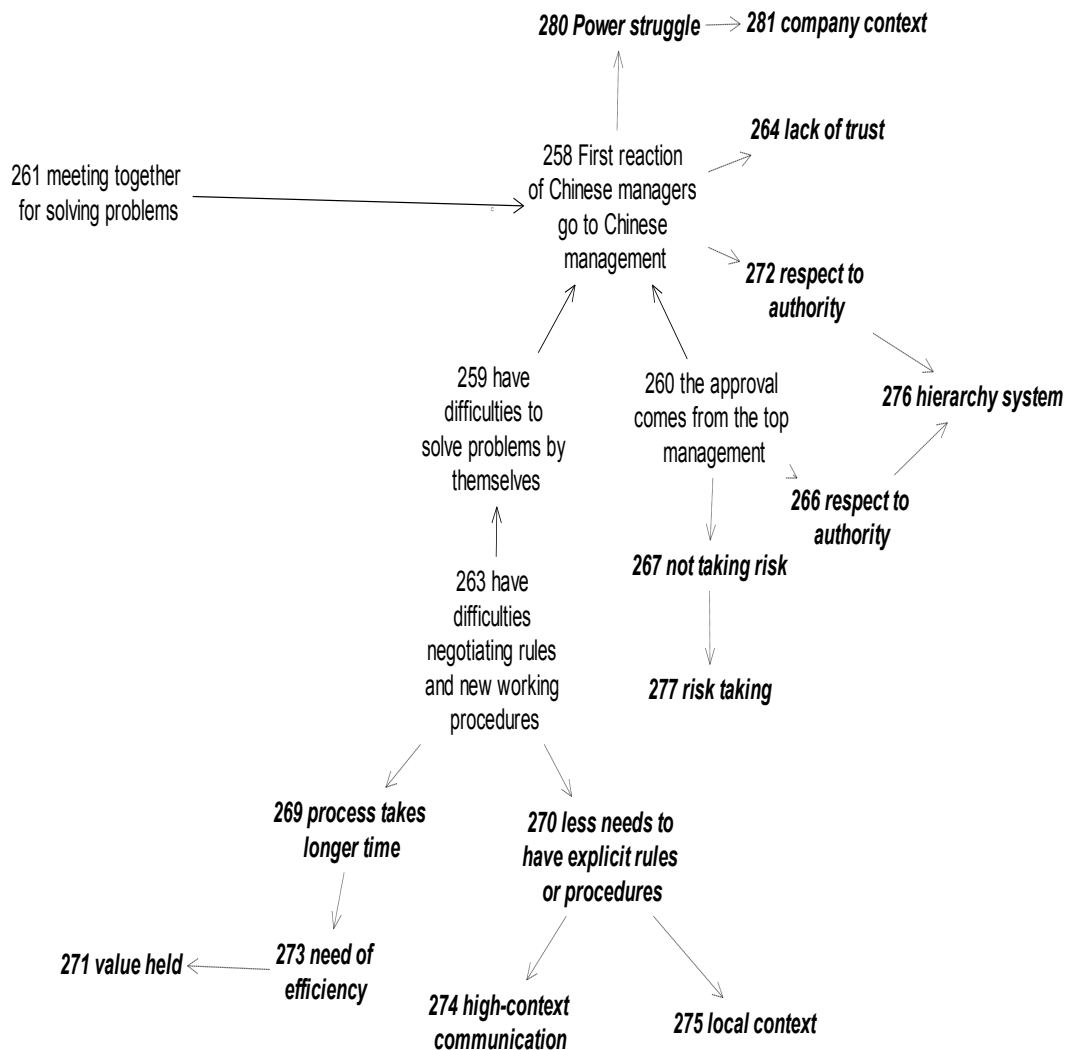
What is different in France?

The French interviewee compares the decision-making behaviours of Chinese managers with what the French manager would do in the similar situation. He observes that his French subordinates would meet together first to solve problems (261), while the Chinese managers' first reaction tend to be going to the Chinese senior management of the company when they have conflicts (256). French managers tend to make group decisions while the Chinese ones preferred to practice individually.

Three factors emerged as important in this comparison of different behaviours. First, company context of power struggle (280) again plays a very important role. It is one of the main reasons that separate French and Chinese managers in decision-making process. The other two factors are related to the perception of hierarchy system (276) and risk taking (277) respectfully, both of which are different in various national cultures. It could be interpreted that the Chinese managers' respect to authority (272) and not willing to take risks are the drive for them to go to superior management for advice before trying to find solution by themselves.

Similar to the decision of promotion in the same company, the manager's work value of efficiency have also been referred in the process. The manager observed that the Chinese managers have difficulties to solve problems by themselves (259) because they have difficulties to negotiate to rules, new working procedures (263). The long time needed for this process (269) is against the working value of efficiency that Mr. L held (273). However, being a French manager working in China, he have not realised that there may not be another explanation, that there is no need for explicit new rules or procedures (270) for Chinese managers, as happens in high-context

communication, and in a developing economy.



5.3.2 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 2

The manager in Interview 2 however, makes decisions like one would in the army. He makes individual decisions but double check with other managers. Based on his perception of Chinese hierarchical system in management, he decides that to rule like

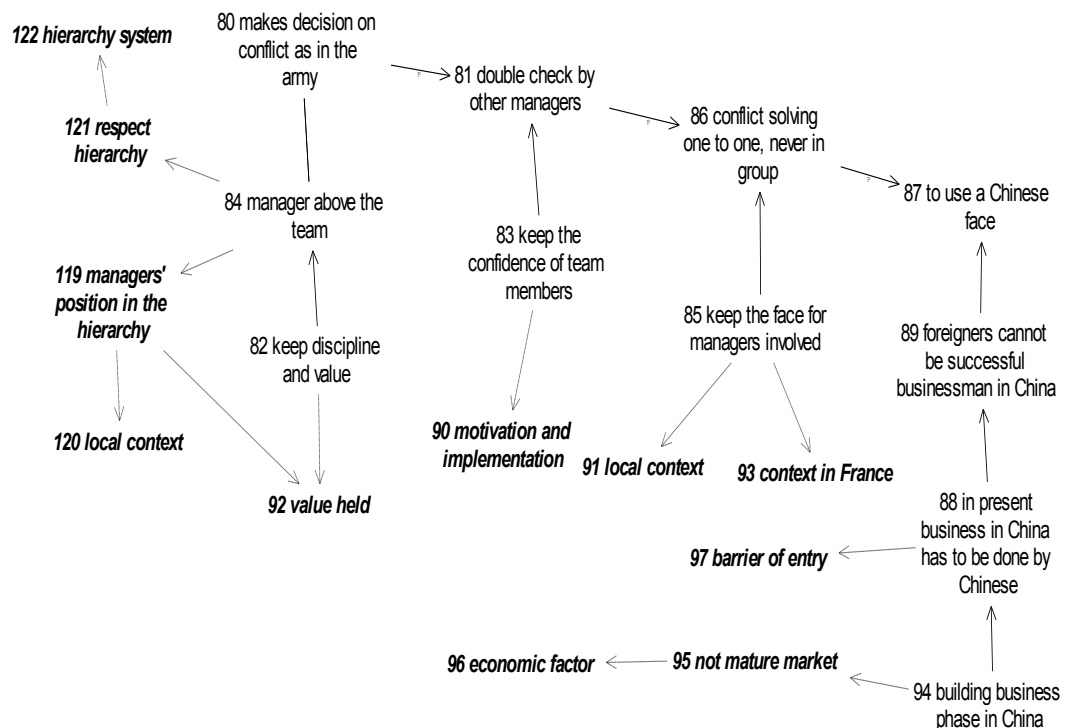
one would in an army is the best way for his team member to respect the manager. Problem solving is also done one-to-one, never in groups. This is to save the face of the managers involves, which is a typical local context but with similar phenomenon in the manager's home country.

What happens in China?

The French manager makes individual decisions to “rule like in the army” (80) when his subordinates in China have conflict. His reasoning for the particular decision process is based on his own understanding and interpretation of a local hierarchical context, which is that the managers' position in the companies in China should be “above the organisation”, that is, above the team members (84). However, the manager seems not sure of his understanding, which is an extreme and literal interpretation of the local culture, that he would ask other managers to check (81) if his decision is a good one. As a result it would help to keep the motivation (83) of the team.

The manager discusses with persons involved individually (86) for implementation of the decision, which is very important to keep the “face” (85) of the Chinese employees which is a local context that is also mentioned by other interviewees. However, the manager points out that “face” is not only Chinese cultural characteristics, it is international and French managers' also need to be given “face” in conflict solving discussions. The phenomenon exists in both manager's home culture and guest culture.

An interesting account from the French manager is that he uses a Chinese manager to assist him with decision related activities, because of economical (94) and cultural (88/89) differences. It shows that the manager recognises the importance of the local context, and the difficulty for an outsider to comprehend the local context to a sufficient extent.

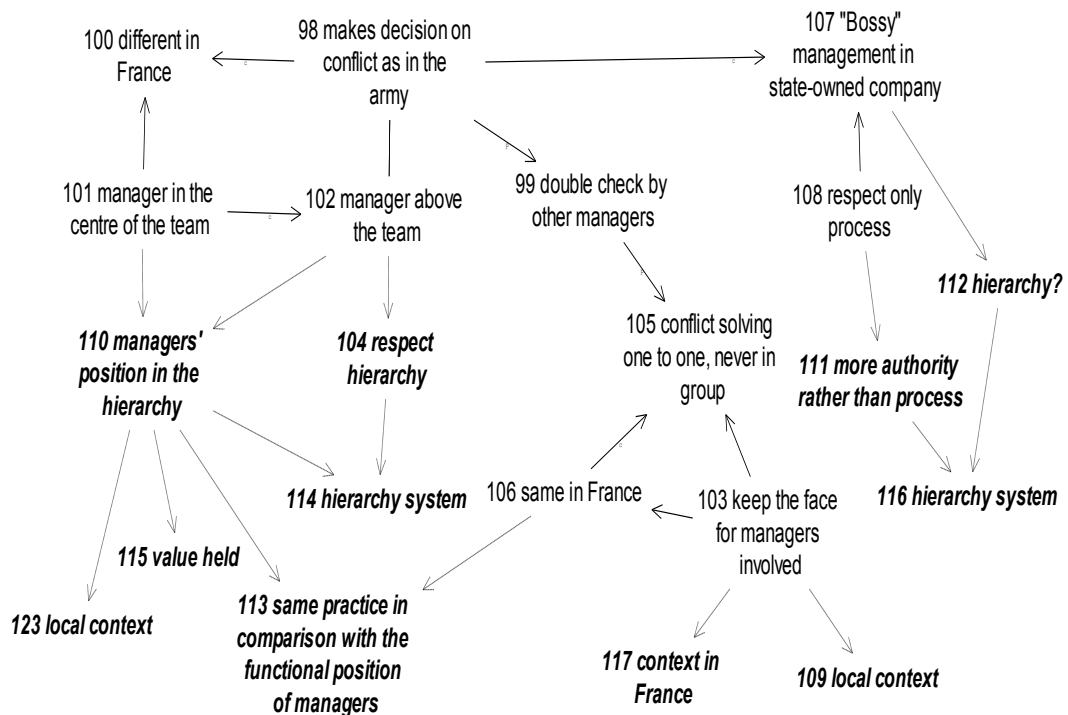


What is different in France?

The manager compares the decision-making process for conflict among subordinates in China and in France, and emphasises the different positions of the managers in France compare to those in China, instead of managers' being above the team, managers' in France "have to be in the centre of the organisation" (101). Despite the difference, similarity exists in the decision-making process in both countries. Face to

face discussions (105/106) for solving conflict is always one by one, never in groups, to keep the “face” of the managers (103/106) involved in the conflict, because “the French managers’ face is as big as the Chinese managers”. The different observation in managers’ positions in the team does not seem to affect the decision-making process.

The French manager’s “rule like in the army” behaviour, which he considered being the local business culture, comes from his observation of some Chinese managers from “state-owned” companies. It is true that historically the hierarchy in those companies is very obvious. However, after almost 30 years of continuous and dramatic change in China this has also changed, especially in the varieties of enterprises that have appeared during this time. This observation and interpretation is biased to say the least.



5.3.3 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 5

In Interview 5 the decisions over conflict among subordinates are made using both individual and group decision-making process. The manager's personal factor – his experience – is the key factor for using the combined methods.

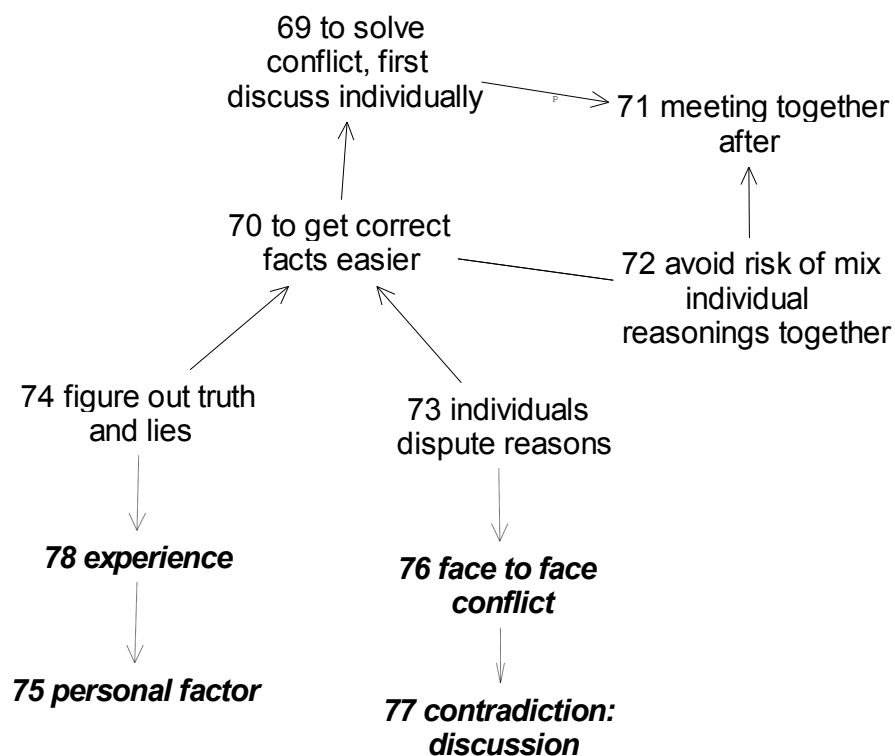
What happens in China?

The process of solving conflict among subordinates in the French company in China is mixed with both individual (69) and group (71) decision-making. First step of individual discussion to get the correct facts (70) seems to be related to personal factor (75) of the manager's accumulated experience (78). Second step in the process involves group meetings (71), the purpose is to avoid the risk of mixing individual dispute to professional discussion (73). The implication here is that the manager makes individual decisions based on the information he gets, well informed in two steps.

The factor that contributes to this process seems mainly the personal factor of the managers' experience. However, his opinion of mixing person issues with professional life being a "risk" indicates that the managers work value also plays an important role in this decision process.

The manager makes an observation of the Chinese managers have face-to-face dispute, which is contradictory to other managers' observations. Avoiding face-to-

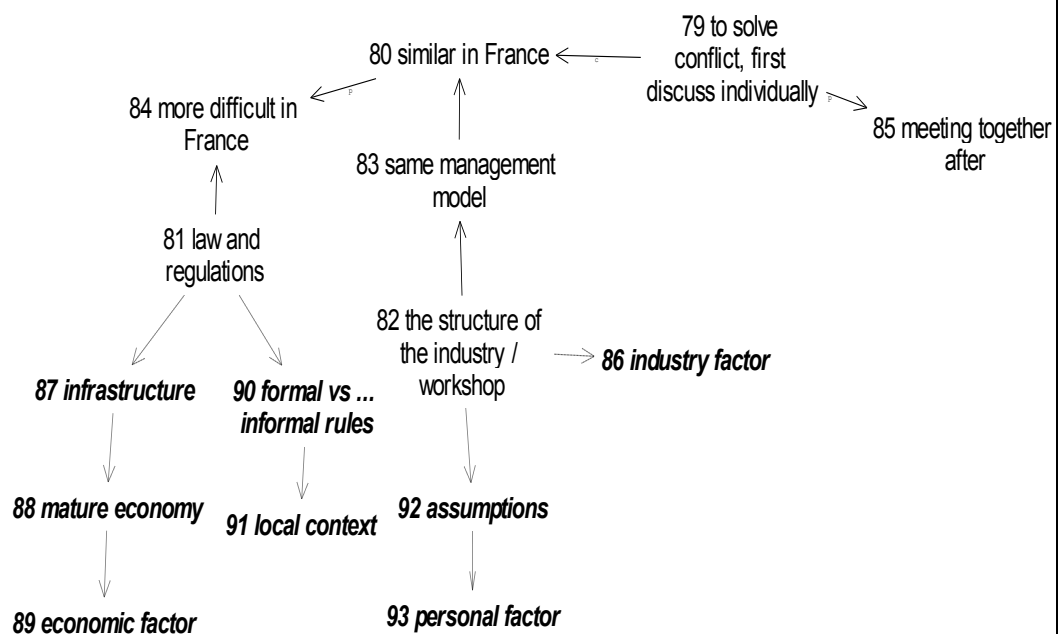
face confrontation is a general perception towards Chinese people, however, the behaviour is dependent on individual characters which may be different from the stereotype. Furthermore, it could be an indicator that the working mentality of Chinese younger generations are changing due to the decades of opening to the outside world.



What is different in France?

The manager's comparison of the decision-making for solving conflicts among subordinates in China and in France is not unlike the decisions for promotion. There are more similarities than differences in solving conflicts China and in France (80).

The manager gives the similar reasoning of using the same management model due to the structure of the company as workshop in handicraft industry (82). One exceptional case of difference is when the conflict solving comes to a decision of dismissing someone, it is “more difficult” in France than in China (84), takes longer time due to the more explicit and rigid regulation of employment (81).



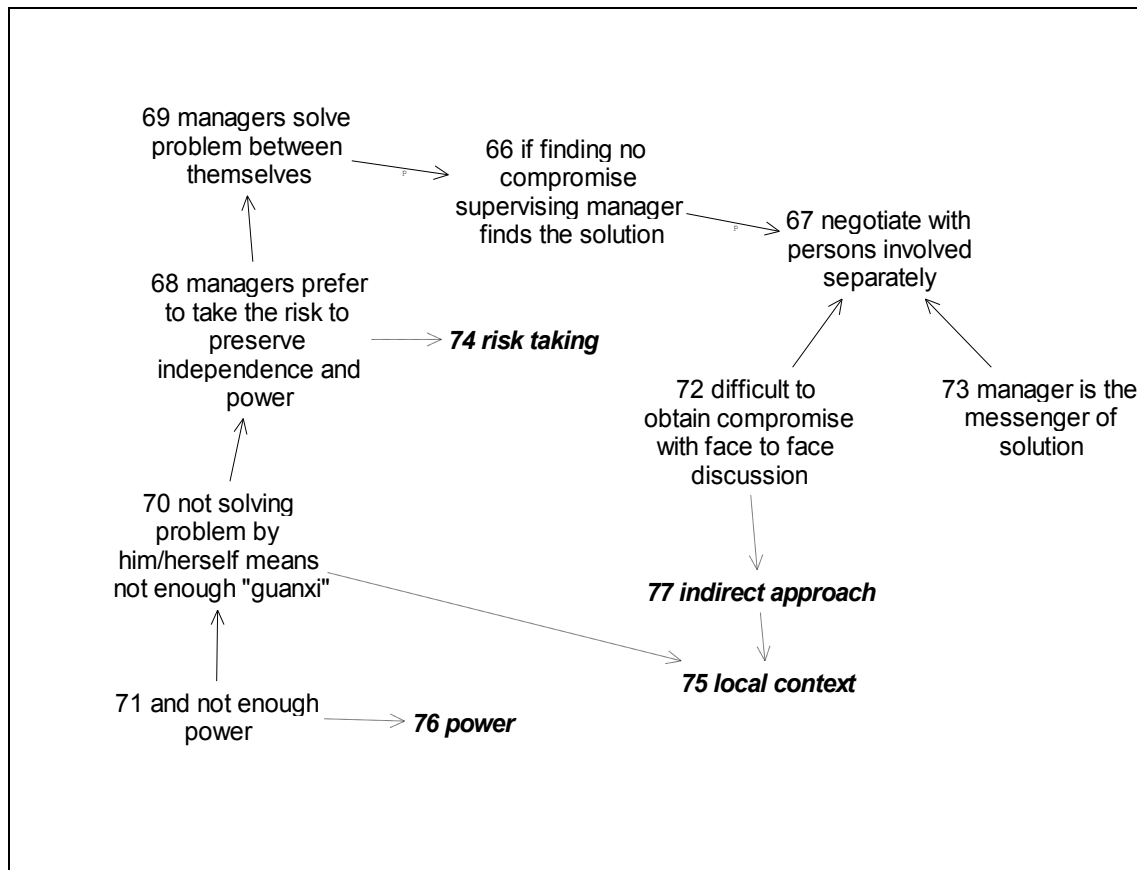
5.3.4 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 6

The manager in Interview 6 uses individual process to solve conflict in his team. He deals with conflicts with persons involved separately because it is difficult to obtain compromise in group discussion. The local context in this case is the key factor in the process of decision-making.

What happens in China?

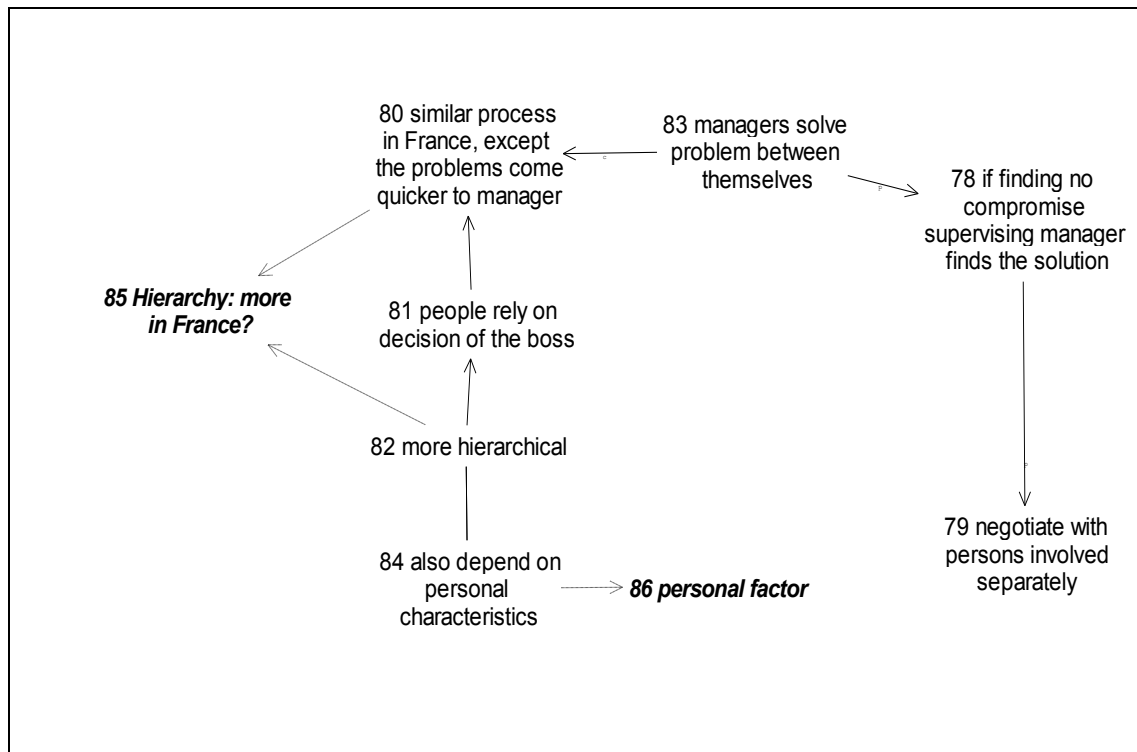
Conflicts arrive at the French manager's desk after his subordinate managers find no compromise among themselves (66). He positions himself as a messenger for solutions (73), that is, he will negotiate with the people involved in the conflict separately (67) and convey the "breaking point" or potential solutions between each other. This individual approach is because that he finds it very difficult to obtain compromise with face to face discussion (72) in groups. The local context of indirect approach (77) seems affecting the negotiation process.

One point made by the manager is that his Chinese subordinate managers do try to solve conflict among themselves (69), which is in contrast with some of the observations from other interviewees. He observes that his managers are "ready to take the risk (of making decisions) to preserve the independence" (68). Depending too much on superior manager may mean the loss of part of the power (71), and "not enough "guanxi" to solve the problem" (70).



What is different in France?

Map 12.2 looks into the part of comparison in Map 12, focusing on the similarities and differences between Chinese and French in making decisions for solving conflicts. The manager finds that “in the same situation” in France it is “quite similar” in decision-making process of solving conflict (80), except that “in fact people may be less independent in France” (81); and “more hierarchical” (82), both of which surprised the manager himself during the interview.

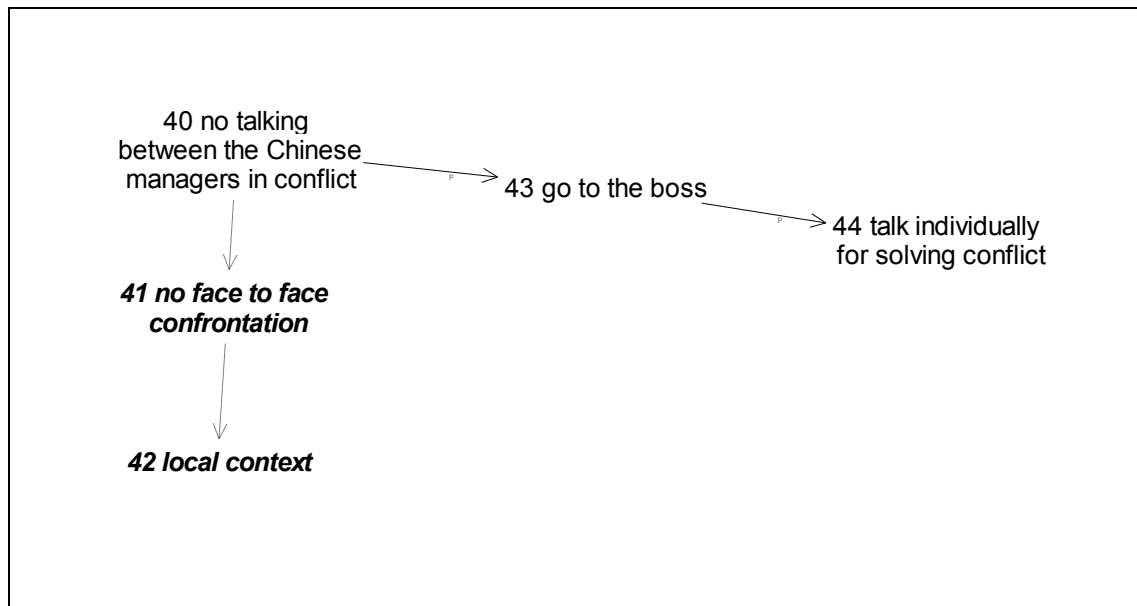


5.3.5 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 8

The manager in Interview 8 observes similar individual decision-making process in conflict solving, and local context appears to be the reason for making decisions individually.

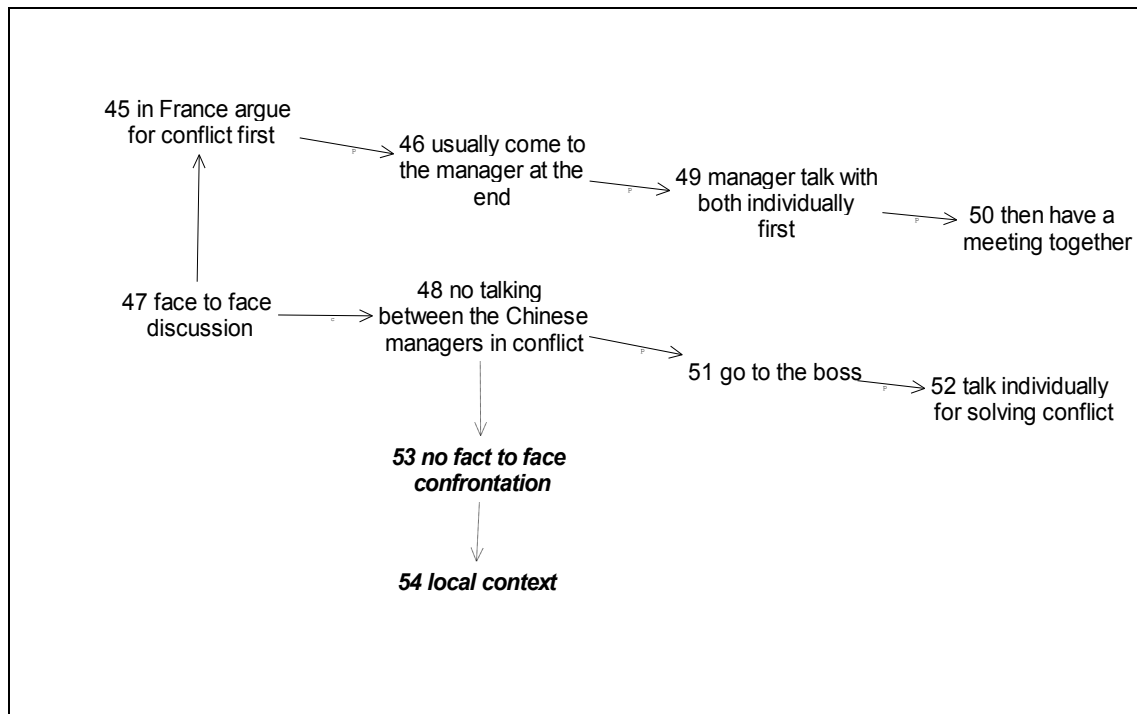
What happens in China?

The French manager observes that there is no face-to-face talking between Chinese managers (40) when they don't agree to each other. The usually reaction is go to the boss (43) first. Individual decision-making process is used during the time of solving conflict (44).



What is different in France?

When there is a conflict between managers in France, managers usually argue face-to-face first, and then go to their supervisors for solutions; while Chinese manager usually avoid face-to-face argument but go to the boss in the first place. The French manager tend to use both individual and group decision-making process in solving conflict when he was in France, but only talks individually with Chinese managers for the same purpose. It indicates that he is not confident that the process in France will work in the similar situation in China. It could be interpreted that his change of process is based on his observation of the different behaviour of the local managers.



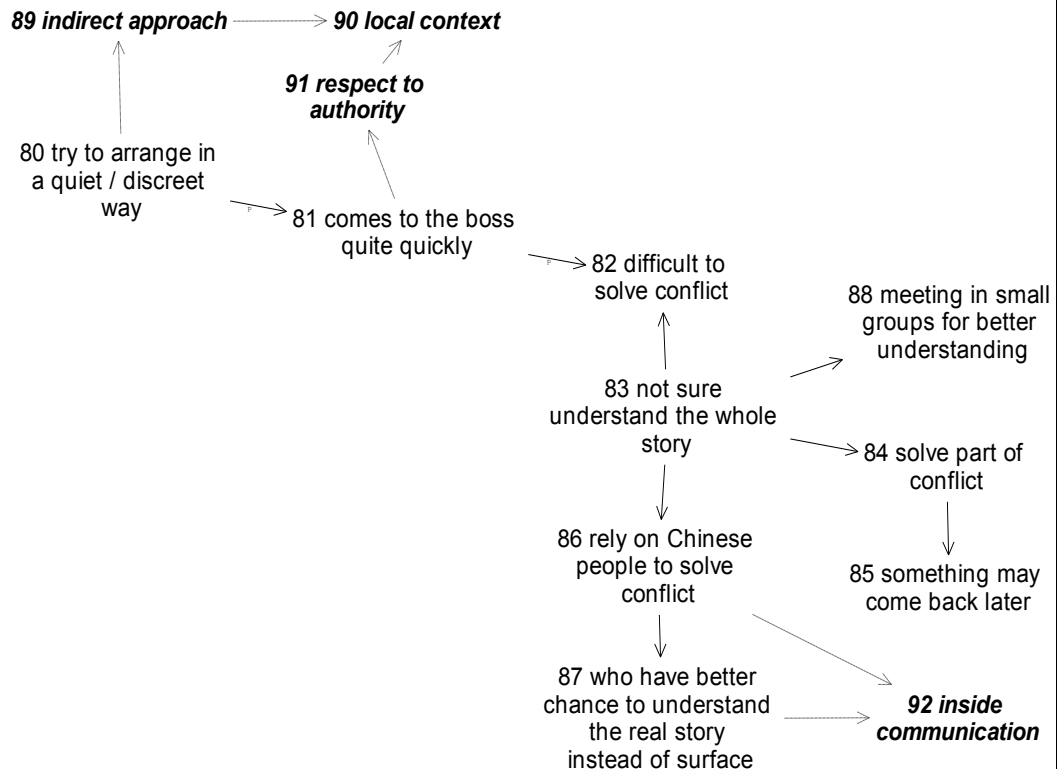
5.3.6 Conflict Solving (Subordinates) in Interview 9

The manager in Interview 9 implies that the decision-making process for solving conflict in his company is arranged in a quiet and discreet way, which indicates a more individual decision-making process. Again local context is an apparent reason; however he relies on local people to solve conflict since they have a better chance of understanding the real story behind the surface problems.

What happens in China?

The French manager's team usually come to the boss very quickly (81) looking for solutions. He typically uses group decision-making process (88), relying on his Chinese colleagues (86) to deal with the problem, because they have better chance to understand the whole story of the conflicts (87) and therefore in a better position to

deal with the problems. Local context, or rather, awareness of lack of understanding of the local context, is the main drive for this decision process.

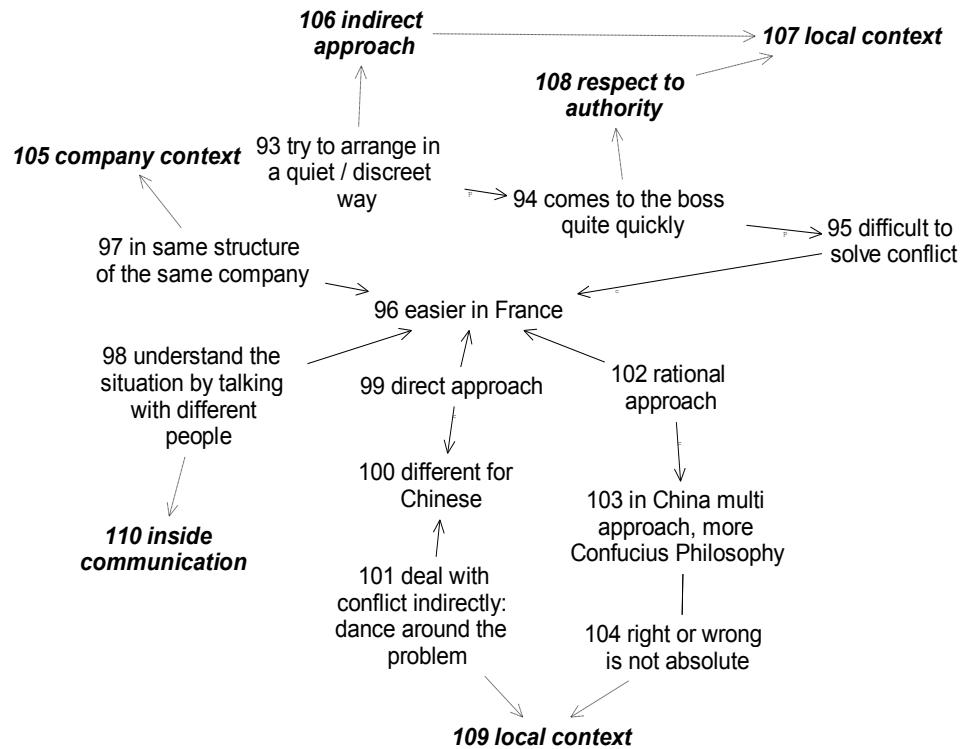


What is different in France?

Although both group decision-making process is been used in two countries, the difference is the level of involvement of the French manager himself. In France he would talk with parties involved and find solutions together, while in China he basically rely on his Chinese colleagues to deal with the problems for him.

He makes detailed observation of Chinese team member, and realises that some of the differences is fundamentally related to a philosophy different from the one in his own

culture. Although the decision processes in both countries are similar, the operation detail of the process is totally different.



5.4 Discussion of the decision process for conflict solving with equivalent-level managers

In this category of decisions there is valid data from 7 interviews. Individual decision-making is the dominant style that is used, the main factors being geographical, values held, and local context. In two cases the managers prefer group decision-making mainly because factors such as company context, local context, and motivation and implementation of decisions.

5.4.1 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 1

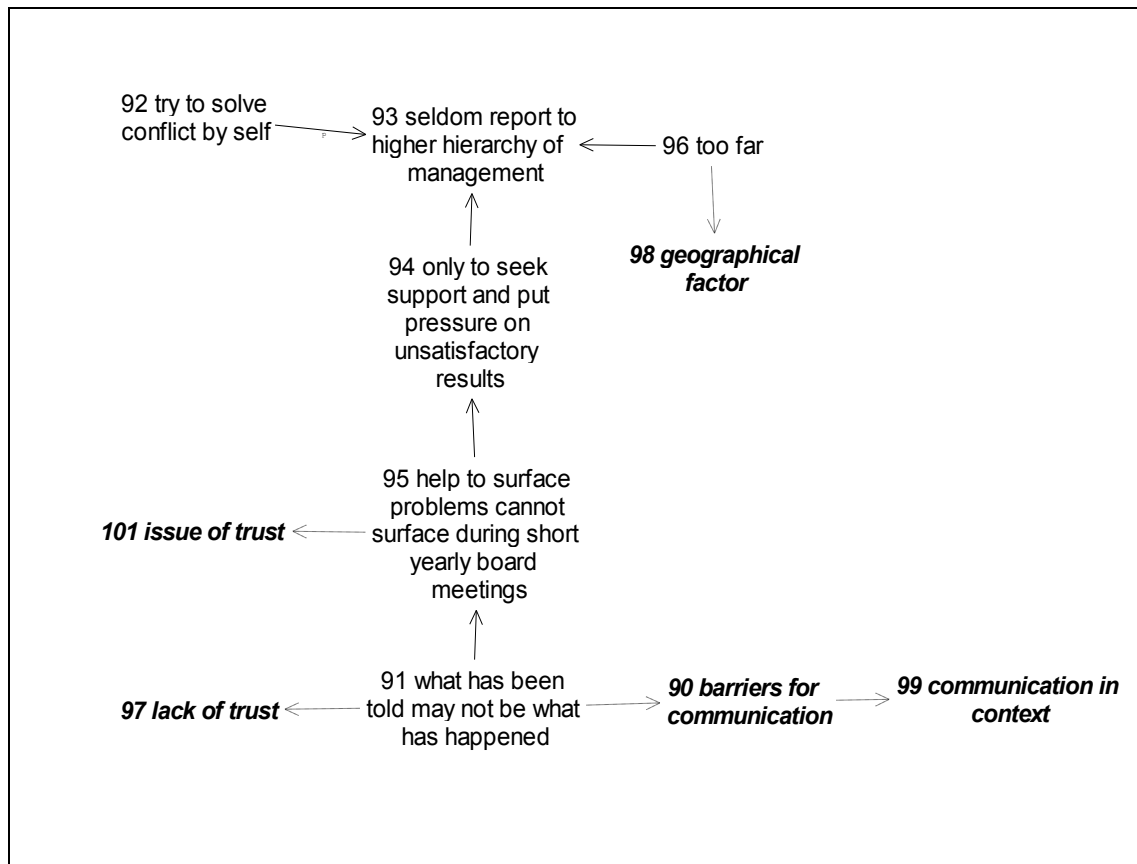
The manager in Interview 1 takes initiative to solve conflict with his colleagues and seldom involves other people. It is mainly because the geographical factor that the foreign investors are in Europe and cannot help with daily operations and problems.

What happens in China?

In dealing with conflict with his same level managers, the interviewee takes individual initiative to make the decisions (92). He brought the problem to his Chinese counterpart and managed to find solution, instead of going to high level of management, in this case the Board of Directors located in Germany. The obvious reason he identified was geographical factor (98), that it is too far from China (96).

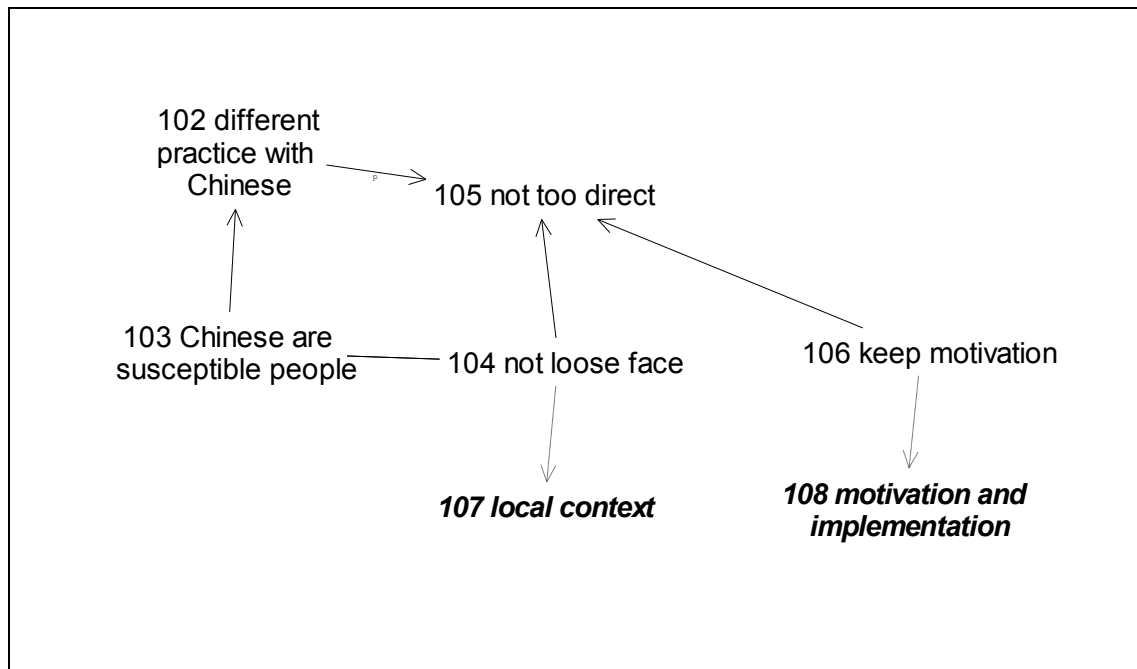
His behaviour here is the same with his French subordinates analysed in Map 2.2, that they both take initiative to solve conflict. The assumption could be that taking initiative and group decision-making is part of the business culture in France, therefore it could be interpreted that the cultural factor, the managers' working value is the underlying reason for the decision-making process.

There has been, however, one exceptional case when he involved the Board in the decision-making process, seeking support (94). Again the company context, which has caused lack of trust (97) and barriers in communication (90), is responsible for this isolated exception in decision-making process.



What is different in France?

The manager took initiative to solve conflict with his same level manager both in China and in France. The difference however, is in the practice (102) during the process. He would pay attention to be “not too direct” (105) in communication, as doing so may cause the other side to lose face (104), which is a widely perceived local context inside out China. Moreover, decision implementation (108) is another factor that in support with the local context. He thinks the indirect approach also helps to keep the motivation (106) of the managers to work with him on implementation after the decision was made.



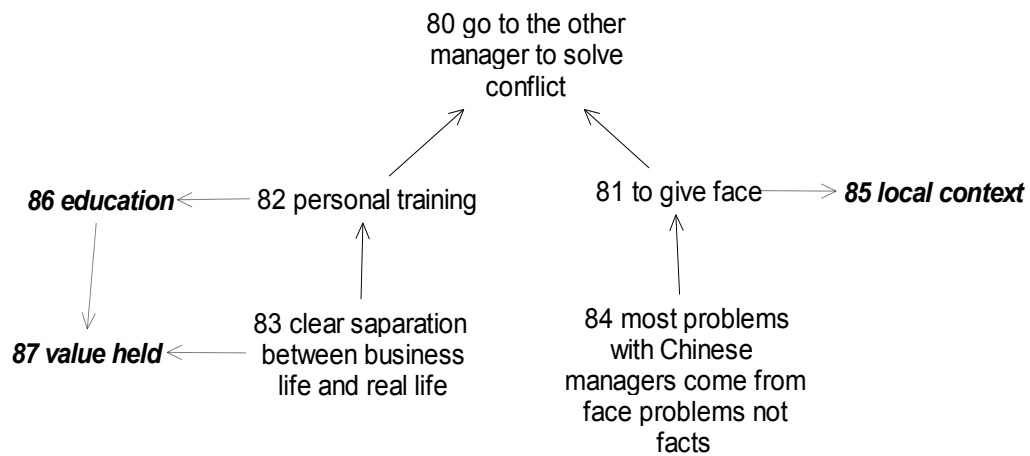
5.4.2 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 2

Similarly, the manager in Interview 2 also go to the other manager to solve conflict, however, he contribute his decisions to his education and the value he held, as well as the local context of “give face” to the other managers.

What happens in China?

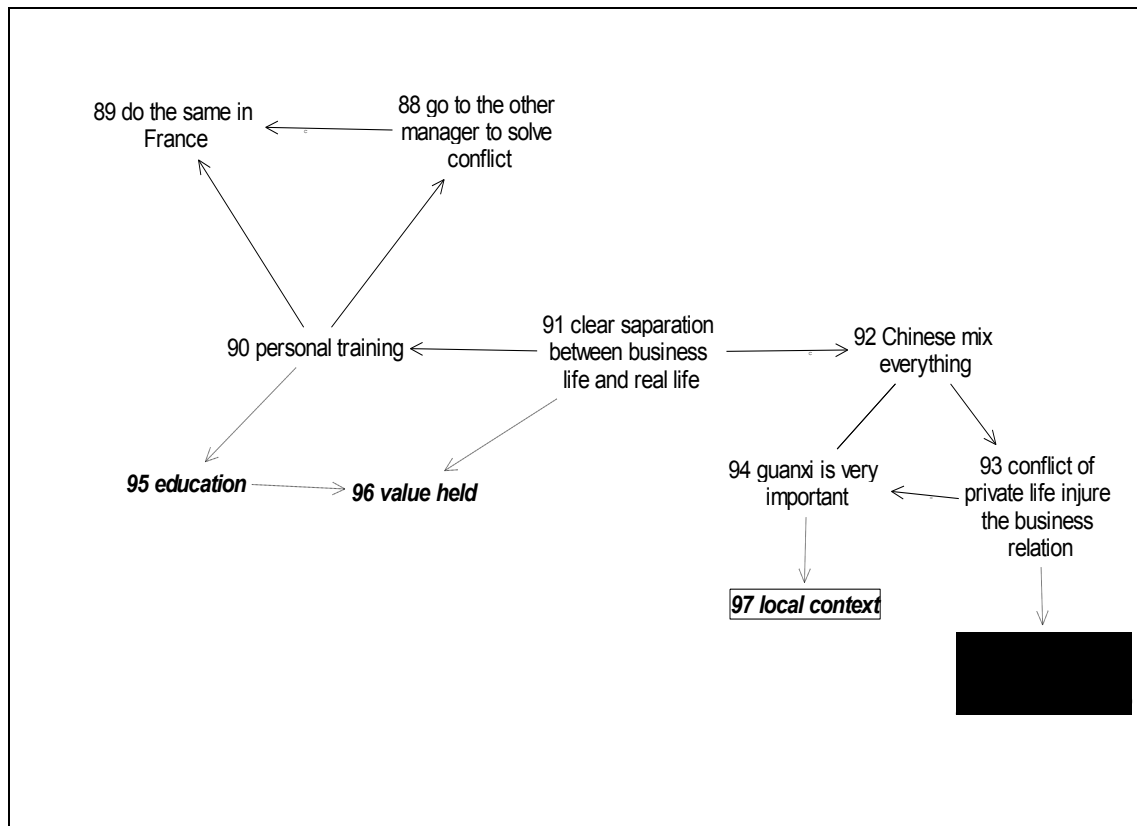
For the French manager working in China, solving conflict with another same level manager is an individual decision, taking the initiative to go to the other person (80) for discussion and solutions. It appears from the first look that two factors involves in his decision-making process, one is the local context of giving “face” to the counterpart (81/84); the other is his personal training (82) which related to his education and cultural background. However, taking account of his observation of

“face” being international, one could say that there is only factor here in effect, which is manager’s home cultural background.



What is different in France?

Comparing the manager’s decision process regarding conflict solving with same level managers in China and France, the French manager clearly states that the choice of individual / taking initiation decision is based on his personal training of clear separation between business and social life (91), which comes from his educational and cultural background. He observes the opposite attitude of Chinese business culture, which shows that the Chinese managers mix their business and social life together (92), that the local context of social network “guanxi” is very important in business (94). However, he judges that it is harmful to the business and decided to ignore the difference. The manager’s own cultural background is the ultimate factor that dictates the manager’s decision-making behaviour.



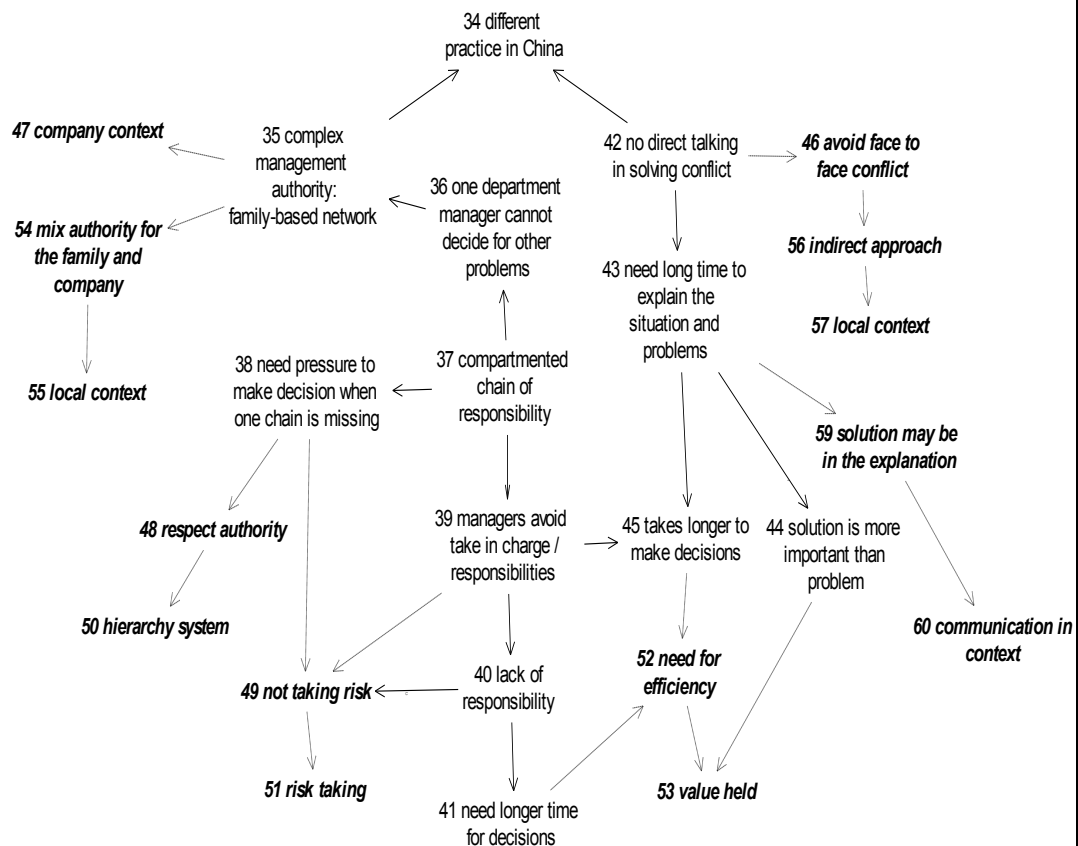
5.4.3 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 4

The manager in Interview 4 is a young manager who works alone as an expatriate for a collaboration project in a Chinese company. He finds himself in a very complex management chain, mainly because the company is a family-based small enterprise. He needs to work with many people for solving problems, factors such as company context, local context, and risks taking of his fellow managers all contribute to his choice of decision-making process.

What happens in China?

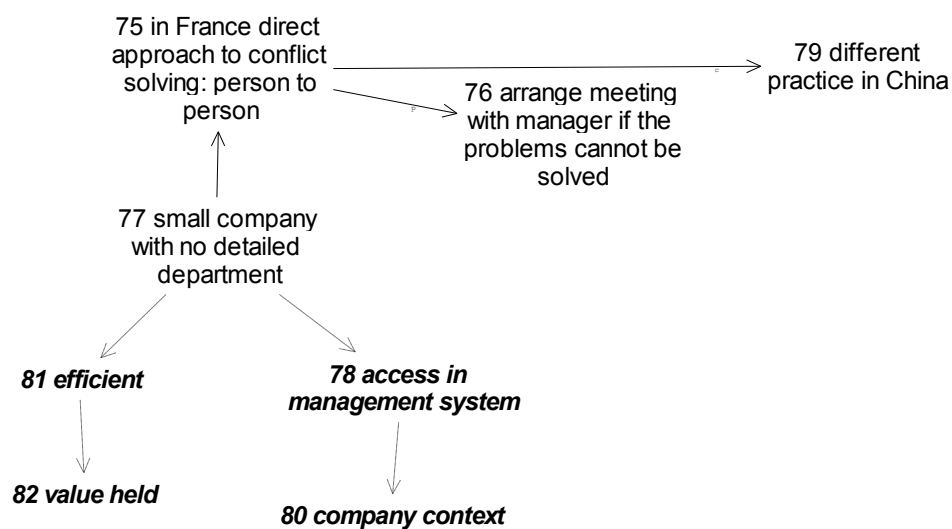
As the only French expatriate manager working for a joint project, he is surrounded by Chinese managers and overwhelmed by the local context and different company

situation. The company has a complex family based management network (35) and the compartmented chain of responsibility (37) makes it difficult to make decisions when one chain is missing (36). He needs to put pressure to other managers by taking individual decision initiative (38) to overcome these local phenomena (39/40). He observes that there is no direct talking for solving conflict (42) among his Chinese colleagues. Consequently it takes longer time (45) to solve the conflict, which for him is very inefficient. Time has been spent to explain and discuss the problem itself (43) rather than finding the solutions, which is against the working value he holds.



What is different in France?

For the difference between decision-making for conflict solving in France and in China, the French manager observes that the practice in this Chinese company is very different, but his decision-making behaviour remains the same, as discussed above in Map 7.1. The direct approach of individual person-to-person process in France is due to two factors, the company context (a small company without very detailed department (63) and work value for efficiency.

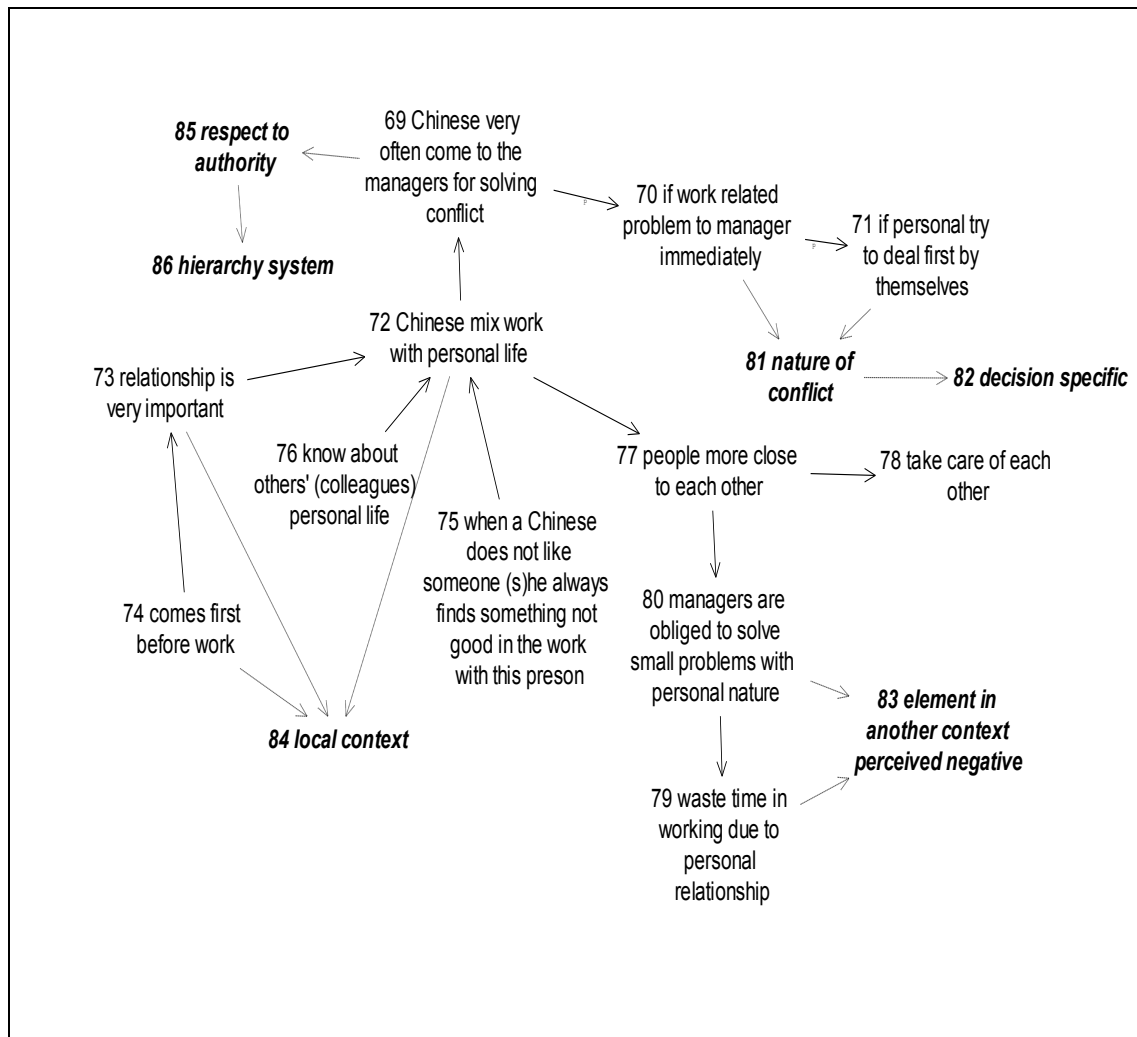


5.4.4 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 5

The manager in Interview 5 implies that individual decision-making is very often used in solving conflict with his fellow managers. Local context is the main reason for the process, which is slightly different depend on decision specific factor.

What happens in China?

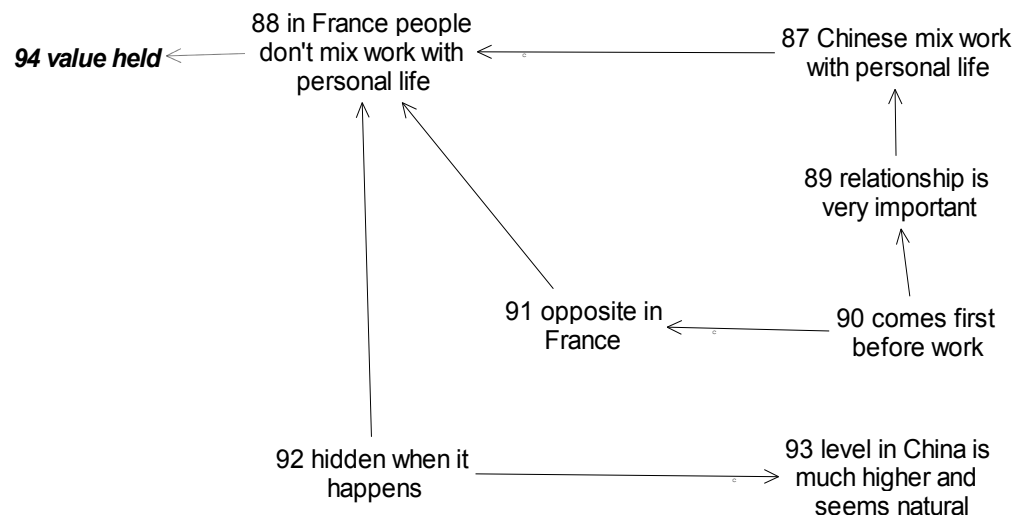
The decision-making of conflict with same level managers seems more a group process. The manager makes the observation that Chinese very often come to supervising manager to solve conflicts (69). However, the process also depends on the decision specific factor of the nature of conflict. If it is work related problem it would arrive on the manager's desk immediately (70), while if it is of personal nature people will try to deal with it first (71). He makes a few observations concerning the Chinese employees' behaviour of mix work with personal life (72). To begin with, relationship is very important and it comes first before work (74); then, people know about others' personal life (76); furthermore, when someone does not like someone else personally "he or she always finds something not good in the work with this person" (75); and finally, people are more close and take care of each other (77), which is positive perception for the relationship network. However, in the same context the managers "are obliged to solve small problems of his or her people, which have nothing to do with the job" (80).



What is different in France?

The manager does not provide a direct comparison of decision-making process but does provide some insight on comparison of attitudes between Chinese and French employees regarding working and personal life. As mentioned above in Map 10.1, Chinese tend to mix work with their personal life (87), while French managers try not to (88). He admits that there is certain level of this phenomenon in France but mostly hidden (92). In China the level of mix between personal and professional life is much higher and seems so natural when it happens (93). People regard personal

relationships to be more important than professional links (90), and in France it is the opposite (91).

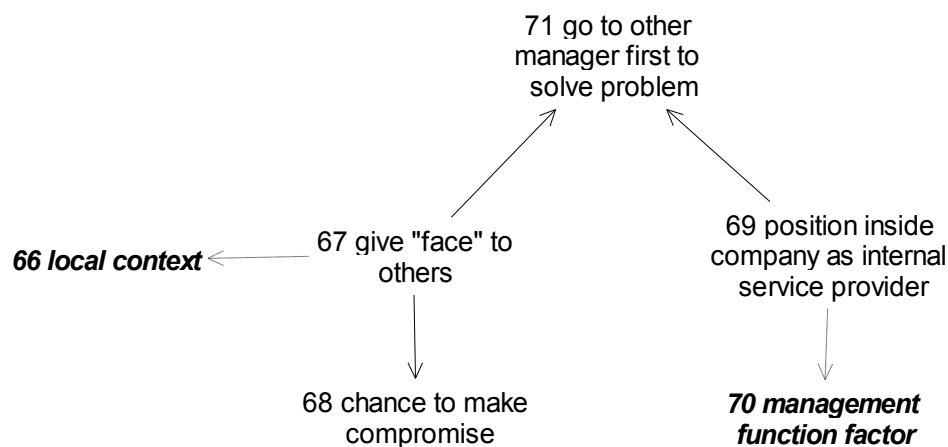


5.4.5 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 6

In Interview 6 the manager goes to the other manager to solve problems, in which case he gives face to the other person; his management function as an internal service provider requires him to do the same. Therefore two factors – local context and management function factors contribute to the decision-making process.

What happens in China?

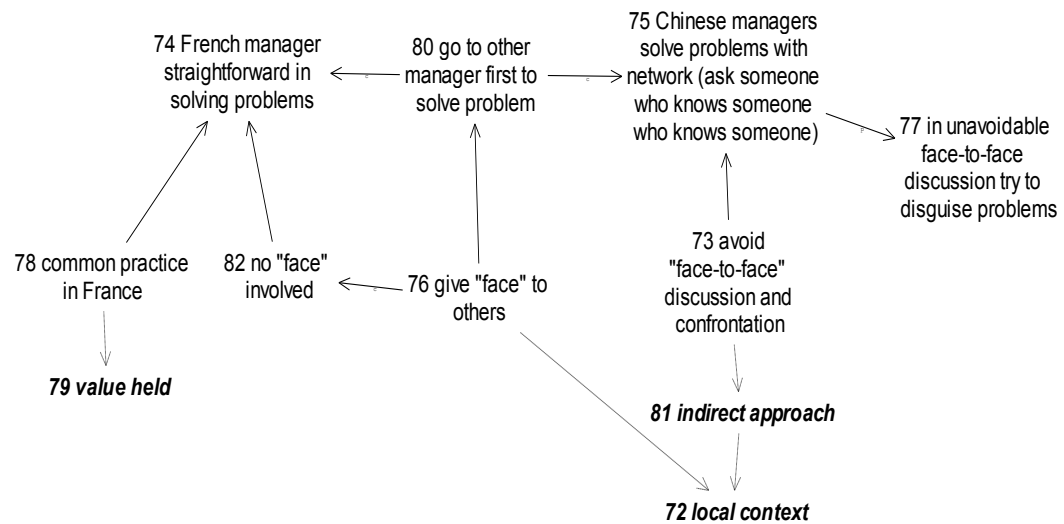
In making decisions for solving conflict with same level managers in the Chinese subsidiary, the manager takes individual initiative to go to the other manager to solve conflicts (71). On one hand this gives “face” (67) to the other manager, which increases the chance to make compromise (68); and on the other hand, his management function inside the company as “internal service provider” is another contributing factor for his active behaviour in conflict solving process.



What is different in France?

In comparison between Chinese and French managers decision-making behaviour, the French manager states that straightforwardness (74) in solving conflicts is common practice (78) in France, which is an indication of the effect of French managers' cultural background in decision-making process. The similar individual initiative is also taken in the company in China (80). The step is to “give face” (76) to the other manager which is one aspect of local context. On the contrary, Chinese managers

solve conflict with social network (75), “asking someone that asking someone asking someone that is coming back here”. They usually prefer an indirect approach, avoid fact to face confrontation (73) in the first place.



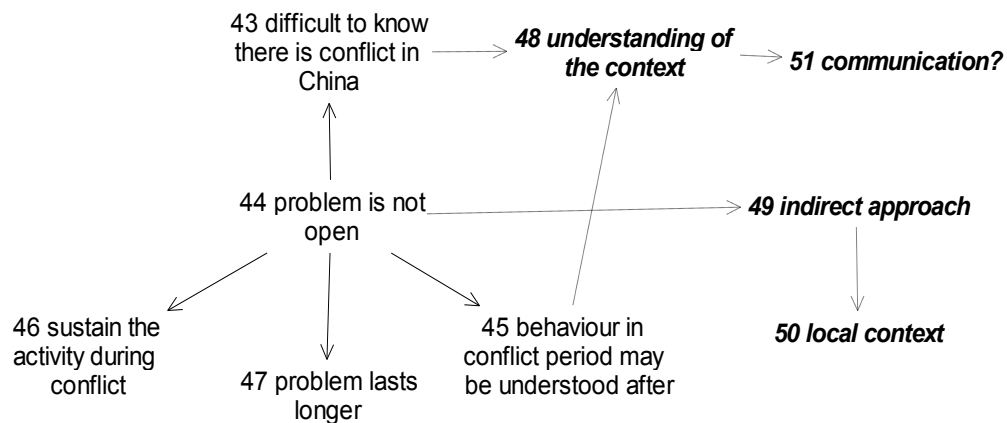
5.4.6 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 7

The manager in Interview 7 doesn't discuss directly about the individual or group decision-making process on solving conflict with her colleagues. She does however, point out that the local context of indirect approach plays a very important role in decision-making process.

What happens in China?

From the observation of the French manager on conflict solving decision-making behaviour of Chinese managers, the French manager finds that it is very difficult to

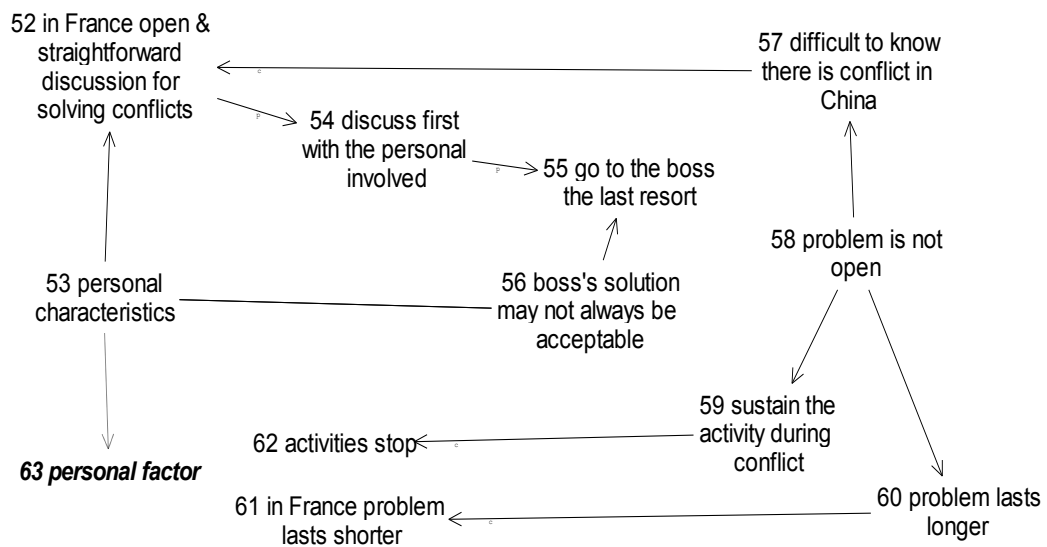
know when there is conflict between the managers, even after 10 years working with Chinese (43) and speaks the language. She describes her observation of Chinese managers dealing with conflict as “not open, people don’t speak really about the problem” (44). She may find after “that because they have a conflict (that) they act in such and such way” (45). No open conflict reflects and the indirect approach of the Chinese managers makes the colleagues from another culture difficult to understand and communicate, and that language is only incomplete part of the communication in high context culture.



What is different in France?

The comparison of decision-making process in conflict situations between Chinese and French managers includes both the managers’ behaviours and the consequence of their decision-making process. In China the “not open” (58) indirect approach adopted by managers make the problem last longer (60), but it sustains the management activity (59) during the conflict time; while in France the conflict solving time may be

shorter (61), but when the managers do have a conflict they would stop the activity (62).



5.4.7 Conflict Solving (same-level) in Interview 9

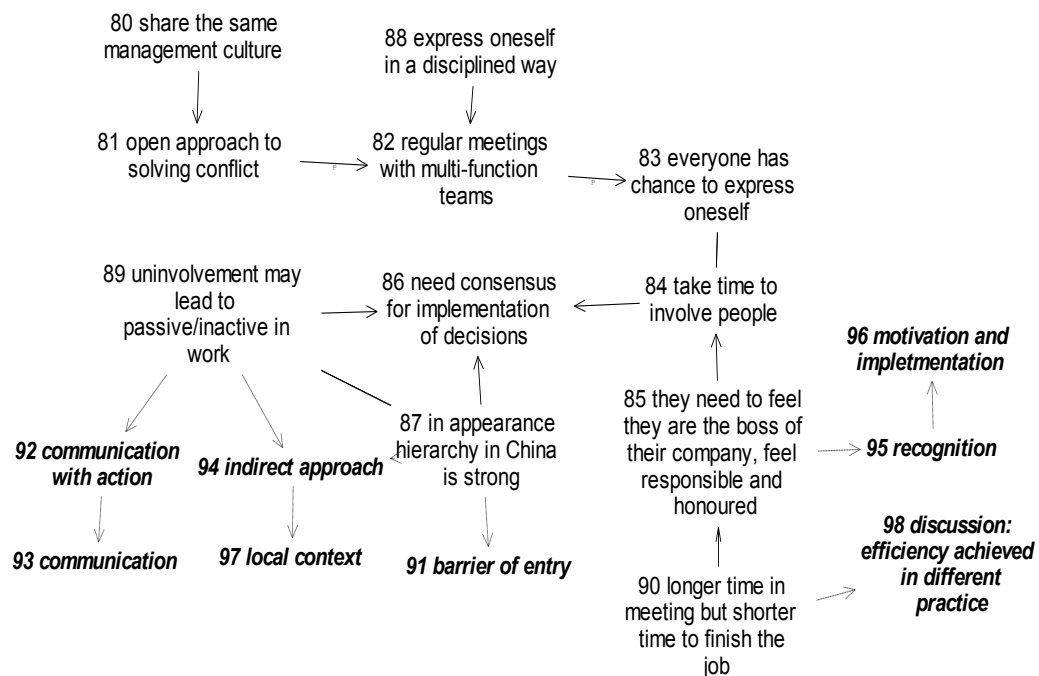
In interview 9 the manager uses group decision-making to avoid conflict with his colleagues. His reasoning is that open approach can avoid passive working attitude which he perceives as local context, as well as ensure motivation and smooth implementation.

What happens in China?

The decision process for conflict solving among same level managers in Company 9 in China is Group decision-making process. It is used for solving conflict situations

among same level managers by having regular meetings (82). All managers have chances to express his or her opinions (83). In this way everyone involved is in synchronised pace, which is very important for the implementation (85/96) of the decisions that have been made.

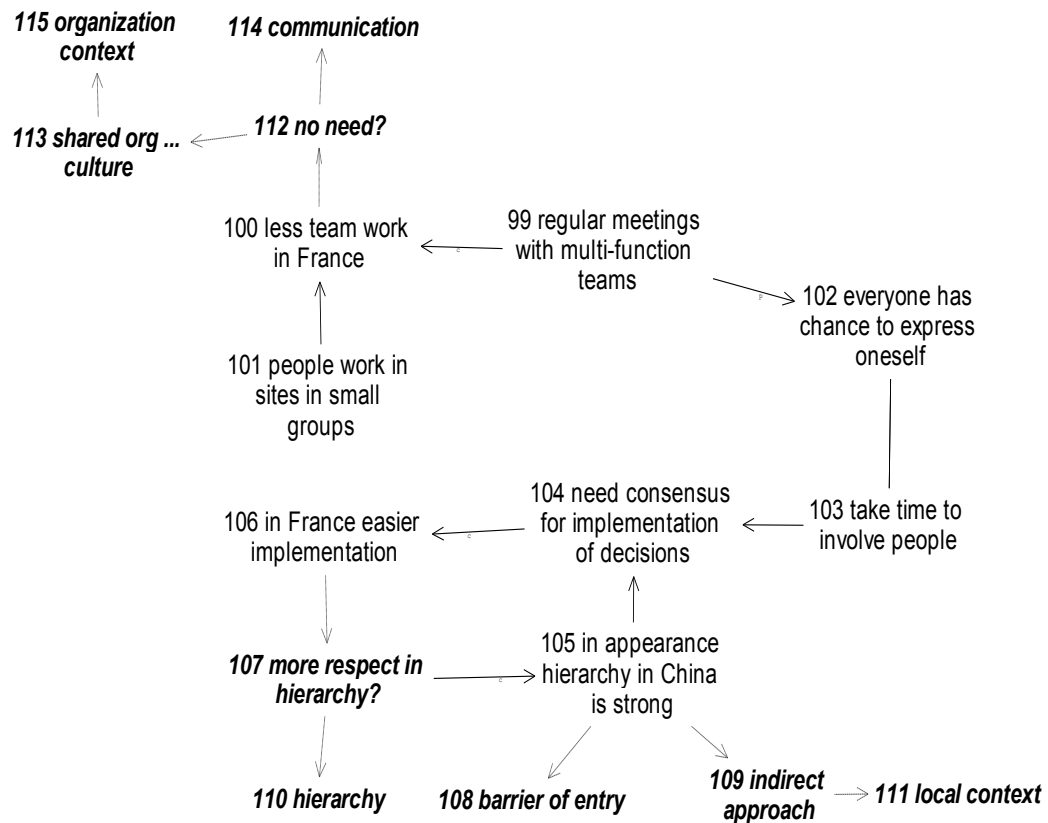
This process may take longer time in meetings to find solutions, but ensuring everyone is involved makes implementation of the solutions easier (90).



What is different in France?

Map 20.2 shows graphically the comparison of conflict decision-making process between Chinese and French companies. As seen in discussion of Map 20.1, group decision-making process is used in the Chinese company to solve conflict among

same level managers. The difference in France is the scale of the teams (101). Managers work in smaller groups for conflict solving and implementation of decisions is easier (106) than that in China.



To make the data analysis more accessible, the following section presents a summary of the factors that are involved in the managers' decision-making process. This gives a clear indication for further discussion in the next chapter and to help inform the conclusion.

5.5 Summary and discussion of influencing factors

The section above presented the detailed findings for each interview and map in the three categories of decision, namely: promotion, conflict with subordinates, and conflict solving with equivalent-level managers. It provides the evidence that cognitive mapping is a powerful tool to organize, structure and analyse raw data from interviews. In this section, we will discuss all the influencing factors in different decision types, and the point of views from each participating manager in relation to their decisions.

5.5.1 Cognitive maps and factors that influence decision-making styles

The information collected in the interviews was transferred into cognitive maps. During the process, information relating to the decision-making styles and the factors influencing them were selected, and clearly shown in the different “branches” of the maps. Let us take Interview 5, Map 8 (refer to Map 8 in Appendix 4) for an example to demonstrate the process and show the advantage of data analysis using cognitive mapping. The numbers in the brackets here and below correspond to the numbers on the map.

In Interview 5, the manager stated that for promotion his decision-making style is firstly to identify the candidate himself (1) and then discuss with his other managers (3) to make the decisions. Looking at the “branch” pointing down, the following action was to “discuss with other managers”, the reason was that he had to make choices carefully (6) because promotion is rare in the company (4). Further down the diagram, two reasons for the rare promotion opportunities were presented: a stable workforce (5) and there not being many people in the management hierarchy (7). The

first reason “stable workforce” can then be identified as a labour factor (68), which is one of the factors that influence the decision-making process that are discussed in the Literature Review chapter (Chapter Two, Section 2.3 and 2.4); while the second reason “not many people in the hierarchy” is because the company is more a handicraft workshop than an industry (8). This factor is then identified as a company/industry factor (46), also discussed in the Literature Review.

Through cognitive mapping data analysis, other factors that influence the decision-making process of the manager were identified, including motivation/implementation (48), the personal factor (47), and local context (45). Furthermore, the cognitive map also helps one to identify areas that may need further discussion. For example in the same interview/map, there seems to be an underlying assumption of the manager, that there is consistency with the products, manufacturing process and management activities in both cultures (43). The researcher should be aware that the manager’s account of the similarities of decision-making process in China and in France are based on this assumption, and take that into account when drawing the conclusions.

The following section summarizes the decision-making styles that have been used by managers, and the factors that influence them to choose a certain type of decision-making style; followed by discussion of these styles and factors.

5.5.2 Summary of influencing factors

The table below summarises the managers’ styles when making decisions on promotion and solving conflicts.

Table 8: Summary of decision styles and factors

	Decision Styles	Decisive Factors	Affecting Factors	Comparison
Promotion				
1	Consensus / negotiation	Company context	Manager's cultural background	Same in practice despite the local context
2	Consultative / consensus	Manager's cultural background	Local context Motivation / implementation	Similar process More people involved in China
5	Individual / group input	Manager's personal experience	Motivation / implementation Labour factor Company/industry factor	Similar process
6	Group	Risk taking Motivation / implementation	Labour factor	Similar process
7	Individual	Company context	N/A	Similar process
8	Individual	Company factor Motivation Economic factor Labour factor	Manager's position	N/A
9	Individual with group input	Time factor Local context Motivation and implementation	N/A	Same process
Conflict among subordinates				
1	Group / individual	Manager's cultural background Local context	Manager's cultural background Company context	Different process
2	Individual	Manager's cultural background Local context	Motivation / implementation	Similar process
5	Individual / group follow up	Manager's personal experience	Industrial factor	Similar process
6	Individual	Local context	Risk taking	Similar process
8	Individual	Local context	N/A	Different
9	Group with assistance from local manager	Local context	N/A	Same process different involvement
Conflict with same level managers				
1	Individual / take initiative	Geographical factor Manager's cultural background	Company context	Same process Different in communication

2	Individual / take initiative	Manager's cultural background Local context		Same process
4	Individual / take initiative	Manager's cultural background	Local context	Same process
5	Individual / group	Decision specific factor	Local context	N/A
6	Individual / take initiative	Local context Management function		Similar process
7	N/A	N/A	Cultural context	Similar process
9	Group	Motivation and implementation	N/A	Same process different stage/time distribution

The summary in this table is divided in three parts by decision type: decisions for promotion, decisions to solve conflicts (subordinates), and decisions for conflict solving (same-level managers). Findings from data analysis are presented for each interview with managers' decision-making styles and the factors that influence them. The factors are identified as either decisive factors or affecting factors, which will be discussed in the following section.

5.5.3 Discussion of findings

A few themes emerge from the data analysis and summary of findings discussed earlier in this chapter.

First of all, the type of decisions is definitely an influencing factor for managers' choice of decision-making styles. As clearly shown in the table, decision-making styles for promotion are very different from those for solving conflict. The majority of the decisions made were individual+ or group decision-making styles. Individual+ refers to the style where the individual manager makes initial moves for promotion,

followed by group input or consultation with other managers. Two managers made decisions for promotion individually, both due to the company context.

When the managers need to be a leader for their teams and solve conflict for their subordinates, the decision-making styles are very different from when they solve conflict with their same-level colleagues. Decision-making styles for the former are mostly a mixture of individual and group styles, usually starting with an individual approach followed by a group discussion and resolution; while for the latter, the overwhelming decision-making style is individual, the managers take the initiative to solve conflict with their colleagues.

In the Literature Review several gaps were identified from the literature of cross-cultural decision-making styles (Chapter 2 Section 2.5). One of the gaps was lack of studies of the decision-making styles with managers of the same level. The analysis of data in this research indicates that level of managers and leadership role is a very important factor in managers' choice of their decision-making styles. It shows in Table 8 that the managers clearly adopt different decision-making processes and styles for conflict solving with their subordinates and with their peers.

Another theme seems to be a dynamic relationship between the factors that influence the decision-making styles. The factors emerged from the data analysis can be categorised into decisive factors and affecting factors. Decisive factors are those that drive the managers to adopt certain decision-making styles; while affecting factors may be in the managers' consideration when they make decisions, but do not have a direct impact on managers' decision-making styles. For example, in Interview 1

decision for promotion, the manager uses a negotiation/consensus group decision-making style mainly due to the company context, a joint-venture with equal shares thus equal powers of the investors. The company factor is a decisive factor in this process. The manager is not satisfied with this process because this is against his educational/cultural background of being effective and efficient, but this factor does not prompt him to change the decision-making style despite the fact that he is the General Manager of the company. However the factor does influence his way of communication with people. He is aware that Chinese people do not like very direct conversations, but he does it anyway because it is more efficient.

Furthermore, the factor of national culture seems to play a more important role in non-routine decision-making than the routine ones (refer to Chapter 2 Section 2.6 for the discussion of routine and non-routine decisions). From the data analysis one can see that the factors influence the decision-making styles for promotion (routine, refer to Chapter 4 Section 4.3) is varied, while factors influencing decisions for solving conflicts (non-routine, refer to Chapter 4 Section 4.3), regardless of managers' levels, are overwhelmingly related to national cultures in both host and guest countries.

Following this notion, there seems to be a theme of similarity in managers' choice of decision-making styles in both cultures. Despite the different decision types, despite the various decision-making styles, and despite the different factors that influence the decision-making styles, there is a consistent appearance of similarities in managers' decision-making styles and practice in China and in France. This seems to imply that the managers' cultural background (home culture) is a factor of paramount importance that impacts their decision-making styles in another culture.

5.6 Summary

This section provides a detailed discussion of the data that is relevant to the managers' decision-making process, and presents the interpretation and understanding of the researcher to further explore the managers' decision-making behaviours and its relationship to their home cultural background.

From the discussion it can be seen that managers' cultural background is one of the most important factors that have significant impact on their decision-making process. It not only influences directly on the decision-making process and decision-making styles, but also has impact on the other factors that involved in the decision-making process.

On many occasions the managers have to make a compromise, that the process is the opposite of their cultural and educational beliefs. However, this cultural background and work value that they hold remains constantly present in their decision-making activities, and prompt them to make changes whenever opportunity presents itself and the circumstance allows it.

As discussed in Chapter 1, any research into cross-cultural topics faces challenges of understanding meanings and being able to interpret and make sense of data.

Globalisation has led more and more managers to work in other cultures, but even globalised companies can have different meanings and operations in different

countries (Ritzer, 2009). Take McDonald's for example, which was briefly discussed in Chapter One. On the surface McDonald's seems to be a much more globalised organisation in terms of consumption of food and services. However, as discussed in Section 1.3 in the first chapter, the image of McDonald's in China is very different to its image in the origin country – the USA. People in China associate concepts such as white collar and romance with McDonald's, which is unimaginable for people where the fast food chain restaurant originated.

George Ritzer, in his work “The McDonaldization of Society” (1993), has used the example of the fast-food chain to bring Max Weber’s rationalisation theory up to date. He argues that McDonald's has become an exemplar of a modern form of instrumental rationality that aims to increase efficiency, calculability, predictability and control. In his latest work “The McDonaldization of Society: 20th Anniversary Edition” (2012) he concludes that although on the surface De-McDonaldization of the society is occurring, McDonaldization is still alive and well in our society.

However rationality, when applied in a different cultural context, may have to modify both its form and manifestation. For example, to increase efficiency for the organisation, McDonald's customers have to clean after themselves in most of the countries; but in China, local McDonald's customers can leave the trays on the table for staff to clear them up. Globalisation in this case, stays in a very superficial form. The concept of efficiency in China has a different meaning, and only by understanding these differences can cultural outsiders work more effectively and efficiently in different cultural contexts.

Research data shows that the rationality of being efficient is the common work value that many of the Western managers hold, and how to achieve efficiency in management has been the topic of study for many researchers. What most of them may not realise, at least not consciously, is that efficiency is embedded in relationship, or rather *guanxi*, in China. The better one manages and balances *guanxi*, the more chances to achieve efficiency in the decision-making process.

All French managers interviewed do realise the importance of relationships in China in the decision-making process, although most of them consider that *guanxi* is a major barrier to achieving efficiency in China. They invented different processes and methods to overcome what they consider the barrier of relationships to rationality, including new working procedures; altered approaches to decision-making; and using Chinese interfaces. However in reality what they do, which is the key to decision-making processes in China, is to manage *guanxi* and balance the relationship among stakeholders. In other words, relationship can be seen as a route to, or even an alternative form of rationality in China for an efficient decision-making process.

Managers who operate in a different cultural context may be constantly surprised by the actions and reactions of their local colleagues, even when they have familiarised themselves with the local environment. For example, most of the French managers comment that their Chinese colleagues always try to avoid face-to-face discussion and conflict. However, in two interviews the managers commented that they had observed their Chinese colleagues behaving differently to this. To a cultural outsider it could be interpreted that these are only individual variations on a stereotype of the behaviour. However, to a cultural insider there could be another explanation. Face-to-face

discussion and/or conflict in China is indeed considered on most occasions the last resort for solving problems, but depending on the relationship between the players, it could be a more appropriate and efficient way to reach a compromise and make decisions.

Many French managers commented that their Chinese colleagues mix work with personal life, which means that friendship and professional relationship between people when they work together are not in their purest form; and inevitably the decision-making process involves both personal and professional elements. On many occasions the French managers were surprised and even offended by their Chinese colleagues' behaviour due to this "unprofessional" practice. The work value in their home culture is very different. To achieve more efficient decision-making and avoid too many surprises within that process, it is necessary to understand relationships in a Chinese context.

To summarise, the key in a cross-cultural study is to understand and interpret data collected in relation to the relevant cultural contexts. This research is unique in that, the researcher is in a position to observe, and make sense of what has been done by a group of managers in a different cultural setting in relation to their decision-making activities. The cognitive mapping technique provides a visual representation of organised data, allowing the researcher to explore the rationale of the managers' decision-making process and styles. Using knowledge and familiarity with both cultures to interpret the cognitive paths and decisions these managers made, the research and its findings provides an opportunity for cultural outsiders to learn how to

imagine what insiders do, to understand particular circumstances in which those managers operate and make decisions.

The next chapter, Chapter 6, will present a summary of the findings, suggestions for improvements that can be made, and future directions for further research.

Chapter 6 Findings and Discussion

As stated in Chapter 1 Introduction, this research aims to examine one of the most exercised management activities – decision-making – in a cross-cultural context, and examine if and how cognitive mapping can be a viable research methodology to explore this subject. The focus is on individual decision-making versus group decision-making approaches and the factors that influence the managers' choices of different decision-making styles. Ultimately, the research finding helps one to explore and understand to what extent a manager's home cultural background influences their decision-making activity and processes in another culture.

6.1 Summary of findings

First of all, let us reflect the research question in Chapter 1:

Is cognitive mapping an effective methodology for a cross-cultural study of decision-making styles? And how can cognitive mapping help one to understand the observed behaviours of the manager's choice of decision-making style in a cross-cultural context?

Data analysis in Chapters 4 and 5 provided the evidence that cognitive mapping is indeed an effective methodology for studying decision-making styles in a cross-cultural context. The cognitive mapping methodology helps the researcher to organise the raw data into a structured form that can be analysed in a productive way.

First of all, in the process of converting the transcripts to cognitive mapping, information related to decision-making and the influencing factors are filtered by colour-coding texts and map-construction. Relevant data was selected to construct maps of managers' reasoning on using certain types of decision-making styles. Decision-making styles, as discussed in Chapter 2 Section 2.4, are an observable construct while cognitive reasoning is difficult to conceptually and operationally define. The cognitive maps transfer the reasoning into describable notions that interlinked with each other to explain the behavioural aspect of the decision-making styles.

The structured data then provides a sound basis for data analysis. These maps structure the data so that they provide a clear visual representation for data analysis. The researcher can follow each decision-making style chosen by individual managers and explore the decisive and affecting factors that influence the decisions.

It can be concluded that the cognitive mapping technique can be a very viable research methodology in exploring decision-making styles and the factors that influence the decision-making process. It helps to explore the managers' thoughts on how these choices are made, and the relationship of the factors that influence the decision-making process.

Managers can make decisions either individually, or involving other people in the decision-making process. The literature suggests that there are many factors involved in decision-making dynamics; national culture is just one of them in an international management context (Hofstede, 1980a, Tayeb, 1988, Ali et al., 1995, McGuire et al.,

2006b). In multi-cultural situations the national cultural factors usually involve not only the cultural background of the managers, but also the local or foreign cultural context that they work in.

The literature shows that the managers' orientation towards an individual and/or group decision-making process could be influenced by three factors: (1) decision-specific factors, such as types of decisions or time availability; (2) managerial characteristic factors such as the managers' cultural background or personal characteristics; and (3) environmental factors, such as organisational factors or the national culture context (Harrison, 1987). The research question focuses on one of the environmental factors – the national cultural background of the managers – and its impact on their decision-making process. Data from the interviewees and the cognitive maps provide a whole picture of the managers' account of their decision-making process and the reasoning behind these processes. Data analysis has identified the managers' national culture background as a major factor in the process.

Data analysis shows that the managers' national cultural background is an overwhelming factor in managers' decision-making styles. All participants acknowledge the difference between the two working cultures and the importance of adapting to the local culture. Managers all try to adapt to what they understand as the local culture, frequently in a superficial form, but in reality their behaviours are unconsciously and heavily influenced by their home culture. The factor of the national culture where the expatriate managers work is also important, but seems to have more impact on routine decisions.

Of all the factors that influence the decision-making process, one environmental factor stands out – the company factor. This has not been emphasised in previous literature. It is related to China's rapid social and economic development. To a certain extent China is going through a phase similar to the Industrial Revolution, which took the countries like the United Kingdom over 250 years to complete. These fast changes inevitably lead to a mixture of different and complex forms of companies, which plays a significant role in the managers' decision-making process.

Some managers realise that it is much easier to rely on local managers to make decisions especially for conflict solving, something that is difficult to put a benchmark on, which is different from decisions relating to promotion.

In general, environmental variables, such as cultural factors, company factors, and industry factors, seem to be important in the decision-making process, on many occasions out-weighting variables that are specific to the decision. An individual's characteristics are present as a factor in the data, but they appear not to be a significant one that impacts on the decision-making process.

The following section presents contributions to the literature in each of the categories reviewed in Chapter Two; and the methodology presented in Chapter Three.

6.1.2 Decision-making

The literature review shows that there remains a lack of understanding about decision-making processes and how they originate, and research into process issues has received relatively less attention compared to content issues (Rajagopalan et al.,

1993). Hence many researchers have argued for further research to study the finer nuances of decision-making process under specific conditions (Fredrickson, 1983, Cray et al., 1988, Rajagopalan et al., 1997, Yaprak, 2008).

From the existing literature, four broad trends have been identified, namely environmental, organisational, decision-specific, and individual aspects, which are important for understanding the managerial decision-making processes. The gaps in the literature are identified as:

- A lack of studies which incorporate a range of managerial characteristics;
- A lack of studies which incorporate both organisational and environmental factors;
- A lack of studies which incorporate environmental, organisational, and content factors including any measure of managerial characteristics;
- A lack of studies which associate the process of decision-making with the perspective of the decision maker.

This study has incorporated: managerial characteristics and environmental factors in the managerial decision-making process, and individual/ group decision-making and national culture. The decision makers and the decision-making process they adopted are analysed in depth, while exploring and understanding the interactive factors that have impact on the decision-making process.

6.1.3 Decision-making process and approaches

There has been disagreement among earlier studies on individual and group decision-making process with regard to two main issues: 1) predominant decision-making styles; 2) the variables influencing the adoption of certain decision-making styles (e.g. Likert, 1967, Heller, 1971, Vroom and Yetton, 1973, Bass and Valenzi, 1974, Muna, 1980, Ali, 1993). This section presents findings in these areas of the study.

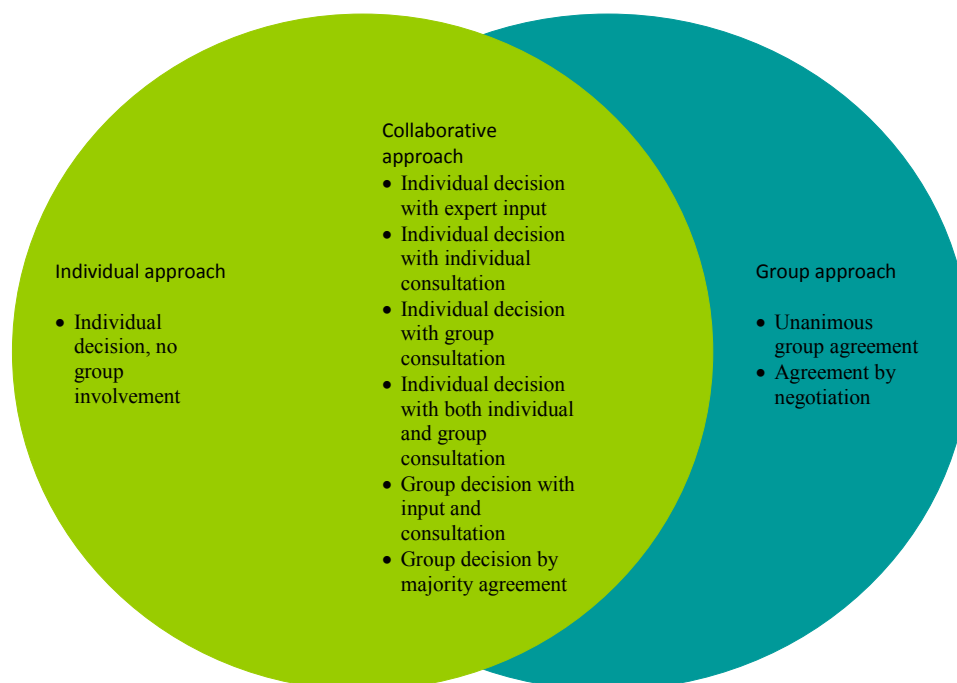
First of all, individual and group decision-making is a very general way to categorise the decision-making approaches that managers adopt. Individual decision-making, in its simplest form, is when a manager makes a decision without involving any other people. This can happen when the manager is an expert in the matter for example, or has clear procedures and benchmarks to measure the decision against. Group decision-making is usual when decisions are reached by unanimous agreement by managers involved, usually when the support of everyone is needed for successful implementation. However, one form of group decision-making has not been identified by previous studies; this is a negotiation group decision-making approach. To achieve unanimous group decisions managers usually need to negotiate through the process and reach a compromise solution. The difference in negotiation group decision-making is that there is no compromise in the process, if one side needs to promote someone for example, the other side will take it for granted that it will also get someone promoted too. Negotiation here is not a means to achieve group decisions but rather an outcome of the decisions.

However, the majority of the decision-making approaches are what can be called a collaborative approach, that is, a mixture of individual and group decision-making

processes. This approach is responsible for the majority of the decisions made depending on different circumstances; and this is when expatriate managers need to learn further about the local cultural context in order to judge what approaches to take when making different decisions. Relationships, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, are the key to deciding when, how and whom to involve in the decision-making process.

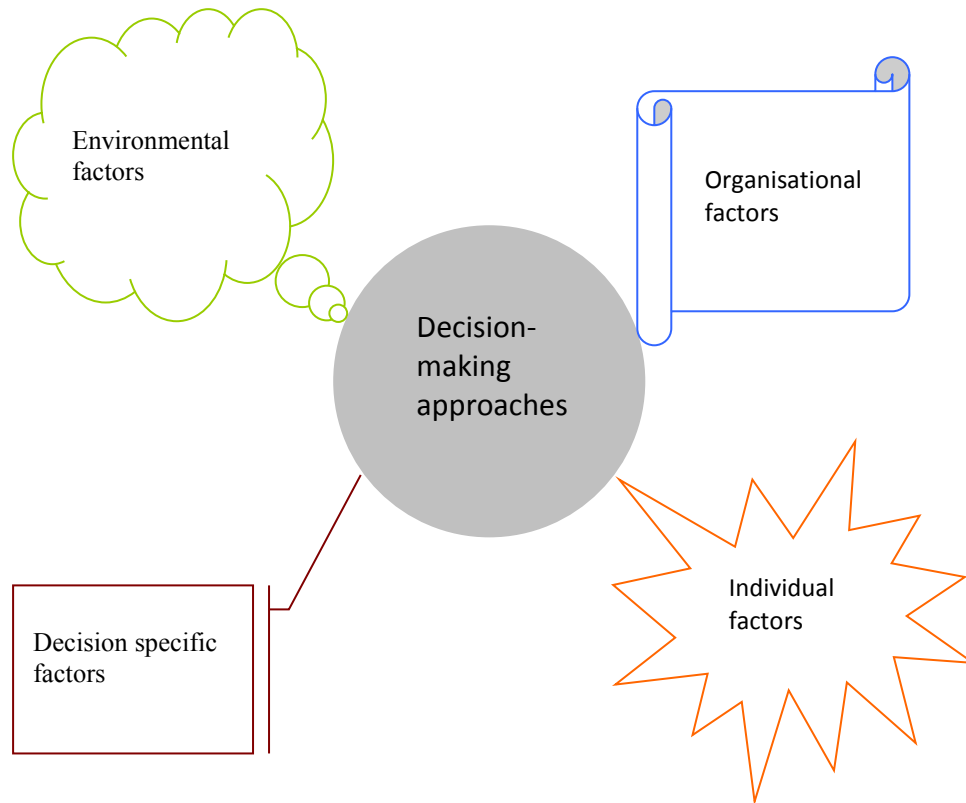
The diagram below summarises the decision-making approaches that were discussed above.

Diagram 3: Individual and group decision-making approaches



The second issue is the set of variables or factors that influence the decision-making approaches. The discussion in Chapter 5 has identified all factors that impact the decision-making process, which are summarised in the diagram below.

Diagram 4: Factors that impact decision-making approaches



The literature in Chapter 2 indicates that there is a general distinction between routine and non-routine decision-making; that a sporadic or “muddling through” process is effective with high uncertainty non-routine decision-making, while a more orderly constrained process is appropriate for more clear-cut routine decisions. The findings of this research indicate that national culture seems to play a more important role in non-routine decision-making than in routine decisions.

6.1.4 Literature Cross-cultural management

This research contributes to the relatively small proportion of literature on 1) non-single country cross-cultural decision-making; 2) the impact of national culture on decision-making process rather than decision outcomes; 3) cultural comparative research on specific aspects of decision-making processes apart from North American and European cultural contexts; and 4) inter-cultural decision-making behaviours, all of which are identified in Chapter 2.

It was concluded in the literature review that besides focusing on the questions of “when” and “where”, more research needed to be done on “how” culture influences behaviour. Many researchers have made the suggestion on a reorientation of research direction to include more ethno-science/ interpretative work. This research has demonstrated that an interpretative approach is very effective in following managers’ decision-making behaviours and reasoning behind them, but with the significant caveat that the *interpreter* has to understand the cultures and contexts involved in order to make sense of what has been observed.

As identified in the literature review, there is a weakness of linkage between national culture and individual behaviours (Cray and Mallory, 1998). The importance of the linkage is not only concerned with the process from aggregated individual behaviour to compiled national characterization, but also in the reverse process of application from national characteristics to individual behaviours, which is of utmost interest for both researchers and managers working in an international environment. The cognitive approach to cross-cultural and inter-cultural management adapted by this research attempts to find the links between national culture and individual behaviours. Cultural *outsiders*, that is, expats working in other countries, could draw guidance

from the observation and interpretation of culture *insiders*. This helps them to understand better and possibly predict how the *insiders* would behave in certain circumstances, and not be surprised too much too often.

Many researchers have made similar suggestions that cross-cultural research could benefit largely from studies considering the impact of the cognitive aspects of culture on management performance. Furthermore, suggestions had been made to improve the cross-cultural research, either to be more rigorous and inventive in research designs; or a reorientation of both research foci and methodologies. This research uses a combination of a cognitive mapping tool and an interpretative approach, which explores a new research methodology that fits the nature and purpose of the research. It also demonstrates that the interpretation of a cultural *insider* is key to providing insights for cultural *outsiders* to understand and predict better the behaviour of people in this culture.

6.2 Research methodology

Chapters 4 and 5 presented the detailed data analysis using a cognitive mapping tool. In Chapter 4 the cognitive mapping tool serves the purpose of selecting relevant data to the decision-making process, and putting managers' decision-making rationale into visually observable graphic maps, which identifies the factors that are involved in the decision-making process, and gives a clear direction for discussion for Chapter 5.

As shown in both chapters, the cognitive mapping technique has good potential for data organisation, structure and analysis of decision-making styles, and the

identification of factors that influence the decision-making process. To organize data, cognitive mapping was used to select information relating to the decision-making styles and the factors influencing them, and clearly shown in the different “branches” of the maps. The discussion in Chapter 5 demonstrates the advantage of using cognitive mapping. Cognitive mapping identifies all factors that influence the decision-making process, and helps to identify areas that may need further discussion. In summary, it helps to identify data that is relevant to the research topics; relevant concepts and comments; and the linkages between them. In this research, the most important contribution of cognitive mapping is to follow the thoughts of the interviewed managers and in identifying interesting points of inconsistency and nuances for discussion and interpretation.

There are however, limitations to this research, which are laid out in the next section.

6.3 Challenges and opportunities

This research project has been a very eventful journey for the researcher due to changes of circumstances. There have been a few big changes in the researcher’s life, some tragic, some joyful, that directly impact the research and writing up.

Fortunately, with the support of Open University colleagues, the researcher has had an opportunity to present this research after years of effort. In the meantime the researcher has continued to work with academic and management professionals in China during the writing up period. This provides an excellent opportunity to verify

the data and rehearse the interpretation and discussion, which consequently strengthen the findings presented in this dissertation.

This learning journey has also provided some thoughts on the future direction of any further research focus in decision-making. For example, the interviewees came from companies that cover a wide range of industries. Therefore one factor – the industrial sector – has not been closely examined during this study. This could be one of the considerations for any future research projects in the area, both in research design and data collection access.

There could be several interesting avenues for future research following on from the present study. Below are some suggestions.

1. A case study with one of the participant's companies.

To follow up one of the managers' decision-making activities using a similar research design and technique. Data collection could be done by both interviews and observation, to identify and discuss the relationships between the manager's comments and his or her behaviours on decision-making.

2. Follow-up study with participants in this research.

Instead of looking at the process of decision-making, one could focus on the decision outcomes of the decisions and their implementation.

3. Study of other national culture(s) and managerial activities.

Identify alternative group of managers working in China and conduct research on similar or other managerial activities.

4. Look into individual dynamics in group decision-making.

From this research, it can be seen that the most exercised decision-making processes are the various collaborative approaches. Further study could focus on the individual relationships and dynamics in these collaborative decision-making events.

6.4 Concluding Comments

Globalisation has led more and more managers to exercise decision-making practice in different national cultural settings. Yet even globalised companies may not be able to apply unified instrumental rationality to increase efficiency, because globalisation and rationality could have different forms and manifestations in different cultures. Efficient decision-making in China is embedded in relationships, which means it cannot be realised only by perfecting procedures and processes. Understanding meaning and predicting the behaviour of local people is very important to allow expatriate managers to operate efficiently and effectively in a different cultural context.

Cultural insiders, those who understand a culture and speak the language, are more effective at interpreting and communicating meanings to cultural outsiders. The aim is to convey what has been observed into explainable terms and help those outsiders to predict behaviours and avoid surprises in conducting management activities. These concepts, and the practice of this study underlie the strength and the ultimate aim of this particular research.

A manager's home cultural background plays a significant role in their decision-making activities in another country. The research indicates that those who could step back from their home country's working values and aim to understand the local working environment have made a first step forward towards effective and efficient decision-making in another culture.

This research shows that the cognitive mapping technique can be a viable tool to analyse data for research on decision-making styles. It is specifically useful in identifying, organising, structuring and analysing the factors that influence the managers' decision-making styles, hence increasing our understanding of the decision-making process.

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Appendix 1

Interview Questions

Interview Questions

1. How long have you worked (or been working) in China (or with Chinese people)?
2. First, let's talk about a decision that you made promoting someone in your department / company.
 - 2.1 In your opinion, what are the significant characteristics in this kind of decision?
 - 2.2 Which of these characteristics is more important than others, and why?
 - 2.3 What were the criteria for the promotion, and which of them was important?
 - 2.4 Who were candidates for this promotion, and what were their backgrounds?
How were they known to you?
 - 2.5 How did you make the decision? Did you involve other people in the decision-making process?
 - 2.6 What were the main reasons of involving (or not involving) other people in the decision?
(The purpose of this question is to explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

2.7 What happened after the decision was made? What were the reactions of the other members of the group?

2.8 What have you done differently when similar situations have arisen since?

2.9 What would you do differently for a similar decision if you were in your home country?

2.10 What would be the reason for that (the differences / similarities)?

(This question helps to explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

2.11 What do you think would be the differences / similarities between you and a Chinese manager in making this kind of decision?

2.12 What do you think are the reasons for that?

(This question helps to explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

3. Now let's talk about a problem that you solved when two (or more) of your subordinates were in conflict. Can you tell me the general conditions of the event?

3.1 In your opinion, what are the significant characteristics of effectiveness in this kind of decision?

3.2 Which of these characteristics is more important than others, and why?

3.3 Did you talk with all the parties involved together, or individually?

If together, go to: Q3.4

If individually, go to: Q3.5

3.4 When you decided to talk with them together, how did you deal with the conflict during the meeting? What happened during and after the meeting?

3.5 What were the reasons for talking with them individually / in a group?

3.6 What was the result after the problem was solved?

3.7 What did you do differently when a similar situation arose again?

3.8 What would you do differently for a similar decision if you were in your home country?

3.9 What would be the reason for that (the differences / similarities)?

(This question is to help explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

3.10 What do you think would be the differences / similarities between you and a Chinese manager in making this kind of decision?

3.11 What do you think are the reasons for that?

(This question is to help explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

4. How do you solve problems when you have different opinion from your fellow managers (at the same level)? Can you give me an example?

4.1 In your opinion, what are the significant characteristics of effectiveness in this kind of decision?

4.2 Which of these characteristics is more important than the others, and why?

4.3 Did you talk with the manager(s) first by yourself or go to your supervising manager first?

4.4 Why did you do this?

(This question is to help explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

4.5 What happened after the problem was solved? How was the relationship between you and the other manager as a result?

4.6 What did you do differently when a similar situation arose again?

4.7 What would you do differently for a similar decision if you were in your home country?

4.8 What would be the reason for that (the difference / similarities)?

(This question helps to explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

4.9 What do you think would be the differences / similarities between you and a Chinese manager in making this kind of decision?

4.10 What do you think are the reasons for that (the differences / similarities)?

(This question helps to explore the constructs of the cognitive map.)

Appendix 2

Example of Interview Script

Company Name: [REDACTED]

Name: [REDACTED]

Interview on [REDACTED]

First of all, thank you for receiving me for this interview. As I showed you just now, my research is about decision-making process. I would like to talk with you about 3 kinds of decisions or similar decisions, first one is when you promote someone in your company. What are the criteria that you use for selecting candidates?

Internal promotion?

Yes.

First of all in competences. So competences, if they are going to be promoted because they are going to take new responsibilities, so it means that I am confident that they have the skill set, functional competences, managerial competences, overall competences. Skill set in order to fulfill the task and so to be with the configuration as of performance in order to have confidence with their own team. It means able to do the job, not necessarily at 100% of course but strong enough to take the place he have to take as of the first minute assignment. So competences. Well after it's not my judgement, it's overall judgement, 360 degree's evaluation or assessment. Of course if it happening in my department I am going to be the sentence to decide the promotion at the end, but I don't rely on me on my judgement. So I practice the feedback technique from all around the party so it means all the senior in the company from other departments for example other committee members especially HR or function which are very close to the marketing such as sales, research development and finance. I take also advice from peers, his peers, so imagine he is the senior manager I will have a look of fellow manager how he perceives, if he recognized or not, will he be appropriate to be promoted, evaluated let's say as fair promotion, not something which is not justified, not to promote people because wrong people thinks that they should be qualified but usually maybe not. So I take into account this and also I take feedback from the subordinates because I need to form my opinions, bon, he was the boss he run the segment so he had the scope of people around here, he was leading some teams and for that team it's important to have evaluation how the subordinate had perceive the boss positively and negatively. So it's not a unique judgment only for me, never, for me it's a long evaluation, not something we do in one or two days, something which take it's majority for several months because in our company we practice anyway very sophisticated management system with objective studying, with strong coaching, with individual development plan, individual training development plan and we follow the people very close in terms of coaching, so we take time to stand back regularly and I would say a promotion is an accumulation of month and month of progress which has been the trust and confidence and at the end it can lead to the promotion. So I think it's very important in fact to keep the collation of the team at the end, not to create unfair feelings.

When you start this process, the whole evaluation process, when you want to have the opinion from the subordinates, how do you do that?

It's a one to one interview always. Most of the time, when we I am talking about someone else I make it one to one, I don't make meetings with several people, I don't practice 360 degrees with everyone in the room. I don't do it. So I make it more individual.

What's the reason for that?

The reason is, I feel that to made 360 degrees with many people in the room you need a professional guy, and I am not professional, it's not my job, I don't have this competence.

What is the difference between a professional?

The professional guy is going to control the group to avoid excess positive and negative, and the people has to feel good also, and I think anyway the guy who is the judge of the method has to be in the room, so it's an open game, you will give me the feedback and I will give you the feedback. Also it's not someone

will against everyone, it's fully interaction for me. Everyone is in the game so everyone receive as he will give, but the rule is clear from the first second the meeting objective is this, we know it's the rule, the people who are here they are accepted the rule. Therefore they are ready to accept specially the negative feedbacks. And but I did it a long time ago this kind of things and I think it's OK but it has to be driven by someone who has psychology, who know how to control the group and I think it was fine. So I don't have this capacity, I don't think. So we have the feeling that if we create more problems than solutions, whatever it's in France or in China, from this point of view I think it's the same.

Would you do similarly in France?

Exactly, for me there is no difference.

Is this company a fully foreign investment company?

We have a partner but we control the company, we manage the company. We have more shares. But in this company we are on the culture, we are not on let's say local culture. We have other companies on the market for example it also belong also to but the management is by Mr. who is applying not at all the culture. He doesn't care, he doesn't need, he applies his own culture. He has set up this company which is 100% Chinese province.

Do you know much about that company?

No. So it's we have a model of business in China for which is complete flexible so we have around companies and every company is truly depending on their background, they have to do it's own model of management. And here we are on the let's say way to lead the business, the way to progress with people and so that in this culture it's as important to pay attention to people than to business.

So you have adapted model from France in here?

Yes, it's the same for tools, values, we have key values such as but we have to find our way to make it in China relevant. Because proximity is in the values, proximity means I am close to you, so proximity is to make it in China, we are not in Germany, not in Czech Republic.

Can you elaborate on this?

They are many differences, there are countries where for example it's easier to get the truth, the deep truth of what people are thinking. In China it's clear that it's difficult to have real truth of what people are thinking, even when they are close to you, even they are with you for 3 years, I have many examples that obviously they don't tell me the truth.

How would you deal with this?

I let him go because I am not going to change this kind of things, this but it means that I learn to be to step back and not to take as a given everything that people are telling me. So I do my job also with 360 degree's methodology or I come back 3 months after on the same topic and at the end I formed my opinion. I am lucky enough to have people who are quite loyal in this company so I know them for many years now and bon, I tried to understand them.

Did it take long time?

Yes, it's very long. It takes time, but long it's not a problem. I don't promote everyone every two months. It takes basically around two years to raise experience in so I have all my time to form my mind. And I can do mistake, I did mistake in the past and that's alright, I find the way to correct the mistake in a smooth way, I think we have solved it. I try to respect the Chinese way to do, not sure that even after 4 years I fully understood the Chinese way, but I don't think it's for them to adapt to me, it's for me to

Appendix 3

Example of Colour-coded⁶ Texts

⁶ Colours Green and Blue (negative comments) are for decisions for promotion; and Yellow and Pink (negative comments) were for decisions of solving conflict. Numbers noted alongside were automatic generated numbers on the maps by the cognitive map software.

3 instance a Chinese General Manager, I am the Deputy General Manager, and we exchange our position every four years; while we have presently a German as Chairman of the Board and a Chinese Vice-Chairman of the Board. At the time the General Manager change their positions also change. So basically our decision process, important decisions, is based on consensus. Consensus means 5 negotiations. So for promoting these people we have discussions, negotiations and reach finally the decision. Which is not complete satisfactory for each other party but ... 6

So that means all these promotion decisions are negotiated between the two parties?

Exactly. So if your study is much focused on decision making in Western countries, in China we must not forget we are in certain social political situations... 8

So this kind of decision making is not your choice, is very much forced by the situation?

I would say that the foreign party is a bit portentous but really the engine, is the engine to bring changes in such companies. While the foreign party which is got very attached and linked to the people tend to be very conservative, not to bring much changes. They have been working these ways since 20 years and do not tend to accept changes.

Is there any problems after one promotion for example if the foreign company wanted to promote someone and you succeeded the negotiation and then this guy started his new job, is there any problem after that?

I would say from my experience it's positive. Immediately I cannot remember any big failure, or big mistake, or things that we have to retract. But we encounter problems that young people which we promoted are not very much supported by their ??? but we manage this.

How?

What is difficult for us is sometimes we would like to promote these people and to cancel one guy over them. So we tend to promote them and to give them a title and authority on some people but to keep the "face" or the position of the former, of the elder generation of the manager. We tend to create too much level in the organization. Do you understand? 9

Yes.

10 Which is not good and affect the decision making, and the activity, the transparency ... You know in our organization, apart from me, we have 3 expatriates, 2 of them are managers. The 2 have very important functions: one of them is Production Manager, the number one of the Plant, we are a big plant; the other one is Director for two departments: one is quality, we control; He is also Director of Technology department. So we control the technology, investment also, the quality and production. So we would appreciate that these guys manage directly the young people at daily basis. It is not so efficient because one layer after another but

What I would like to know is when you have problems, how do you deal with it?

In many ways.

For example?

We shout after him, we complain with the Chinese General Manager, we in many meetings we put pressure on him, openly in front of 20 or 30 people, we make him "loose some face"

The one who is not supporting?

Exactly. We try to be firm, to take very precise technical examples.

well there was, we have a joint venture contract, which originally was saying that the foreign party is responsible for this part and Chinese party for this part. Foreign party for technology, etc. Chinese party for purchase etc. But very quickly well accepted by two parties will not work. So the same time the joint venture say all the signatures must be made commonly by the General Manager and Deputy General Manager. So we only work on this basis. We are a couple, we must agree on important decisions. And the fact that there is these regular changes every four years doesn't create more authority on one side.

Yes, that is understandable, if you have 50-50 share.

what is true is when you have 600 very few more people on employees and only 4 foreigners. And these 4 foreigners 3 of them they are managers, I don't pretend that we actually have as much authority as the Chinese management. I think we have less authority, very surely. All these undercover management which we see sometimes obviously, but that's life, that's a joint venture.

OK. The second decision I would like to talk about is for example, when two of you middle or lower level managers have problems, usually they come to you or they solve problems by themselves?

They very seldom come to me. They would not necessary solve problems each other, but they go to Chinese management. That's their first attitude, reaction actually.

Those having problems, they are Chinese managers?

Yes.

They don't try to solve problems among themselves? Because I saw sometimes people try to ...

Surely they try to solve by themselves, but they have difficulties. That's a problem also in China, they have difficulties to solve it by themselves.

why?

23 They have difficulties to negotiate to rules, new working procedures, anyway the approval would come from the top management. We pass the message that we want people who discover problems, people who solve problems; and not people argue who argue on things, we want results.

And the message is clearly passed?

? Pass better with the young generation. What we see in the young management they are quite upset with the older generation. They tell us very directly.

Clearly two kinds of attitudes in working?

Yes, it's not black and white, but surely we see obvious differences between the older ones and younger.

But what if, for example, two young people they have problems, and they come to you. What will you do?

We discuss, we take time to understand the problems; we make meetings and discuss with them and we try to bring a solution.

Will you ask the Chinese counterpart to join you or you will do it with these two people?

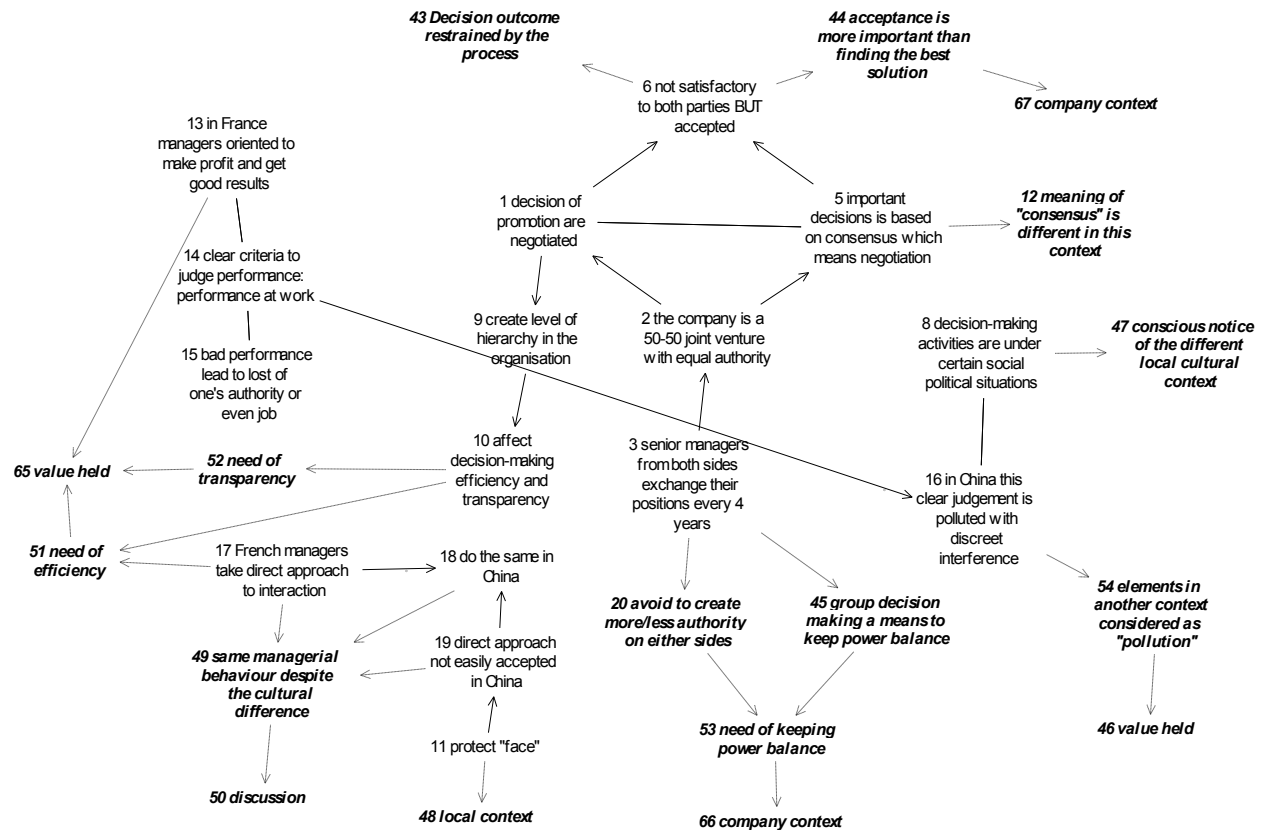
No rule, I would say. Very often if it's only ... yeah, we tend more and more, more and more in the victory of the joint venture, to solve more and more problems. In the past there was 4 expatriate, that 2 of them at no management position, 1 was not very much involved in the management Now we tend to be more ???, more involved in these organization issues, solving problems, etc.

well, that is to say if you think that you can solve the problem you'll do it.

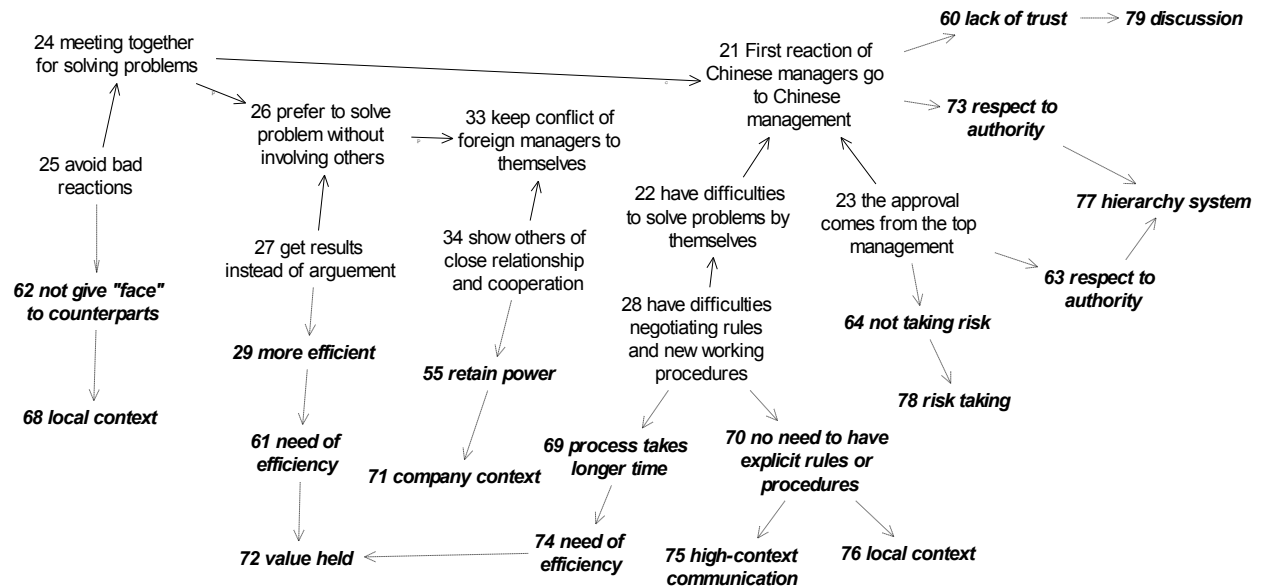
Appendix 4

Cognitive Maps

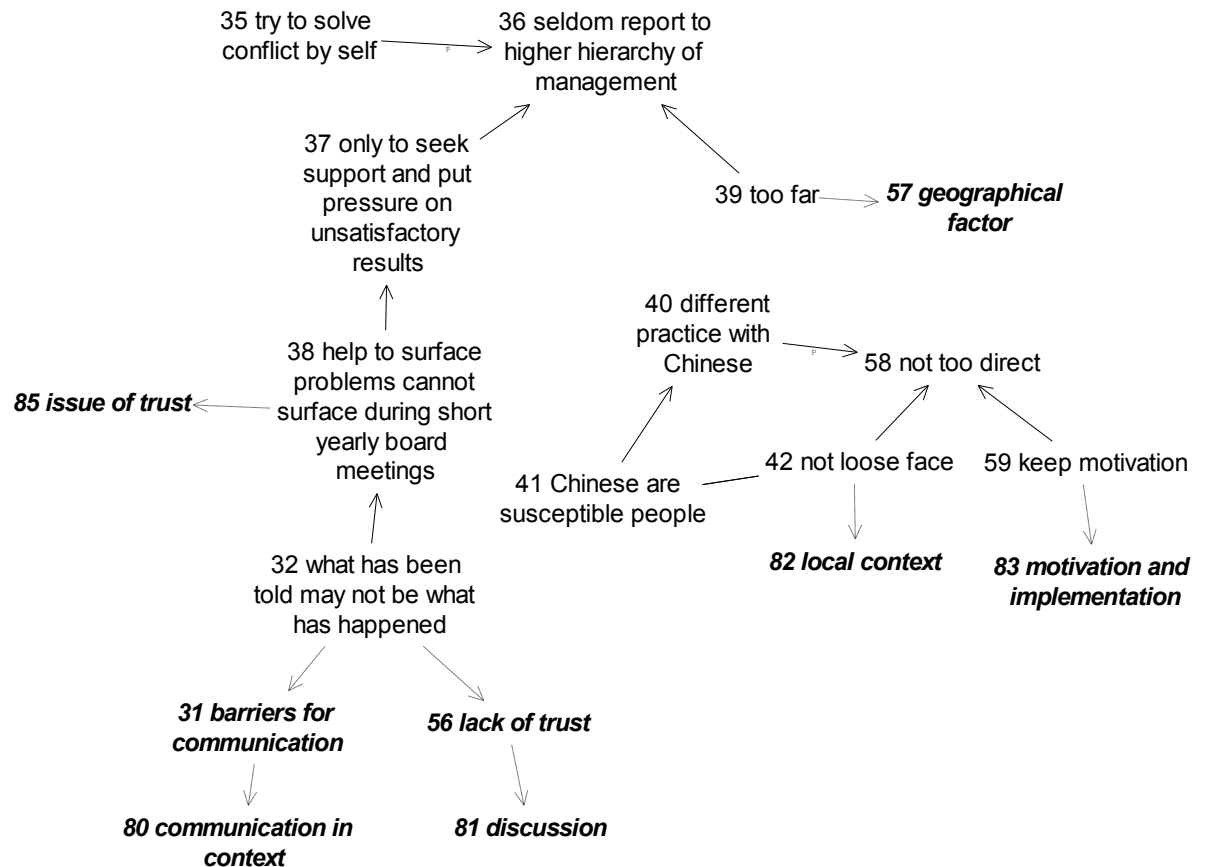
Map 1: Complete map of the decision process for promotion – Interview 1



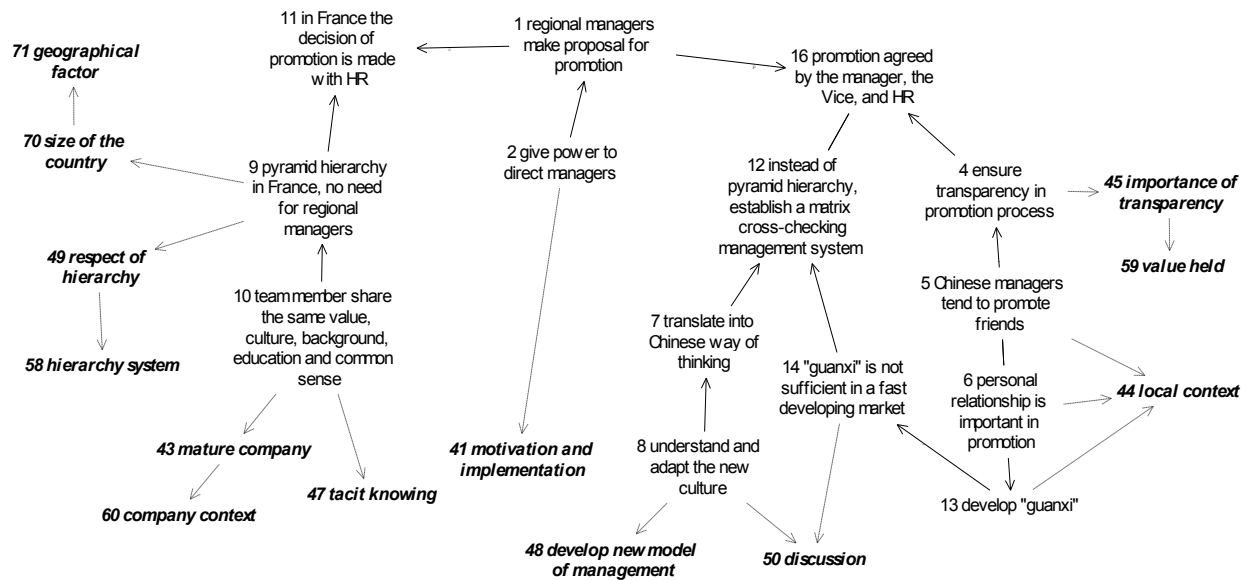
Map 2: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 1



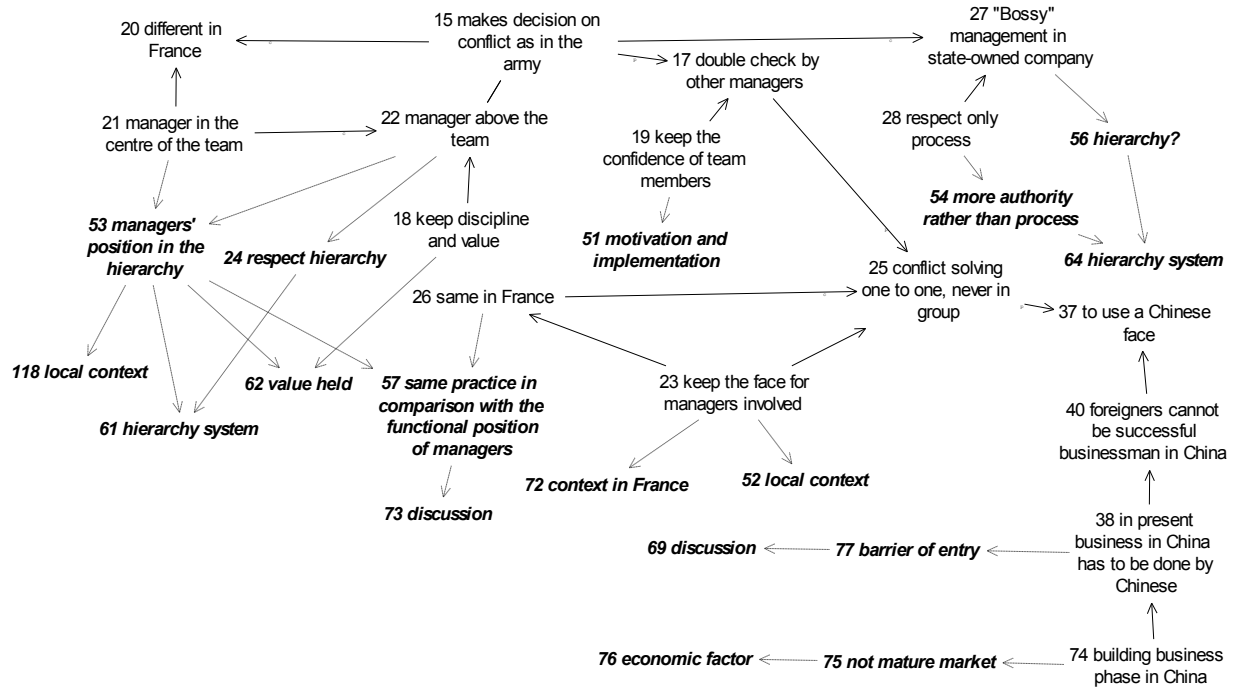
Map 3: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 1



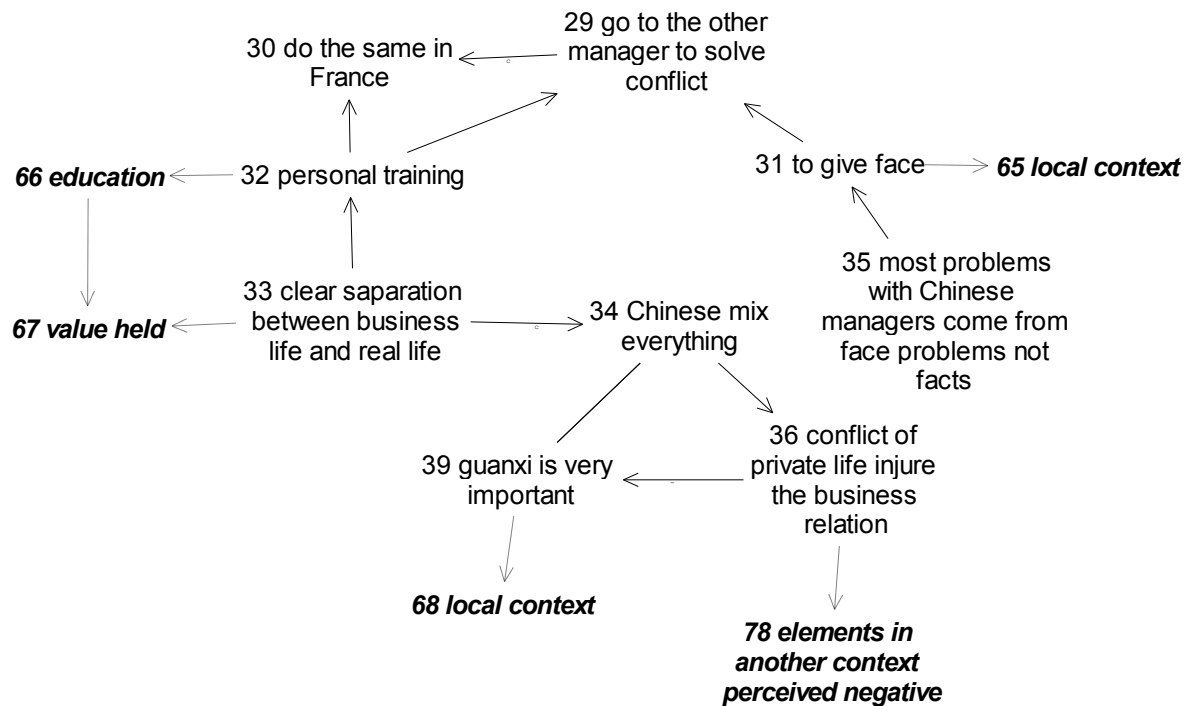
Map 4: Complete map of the decision process for promotion – interview 2



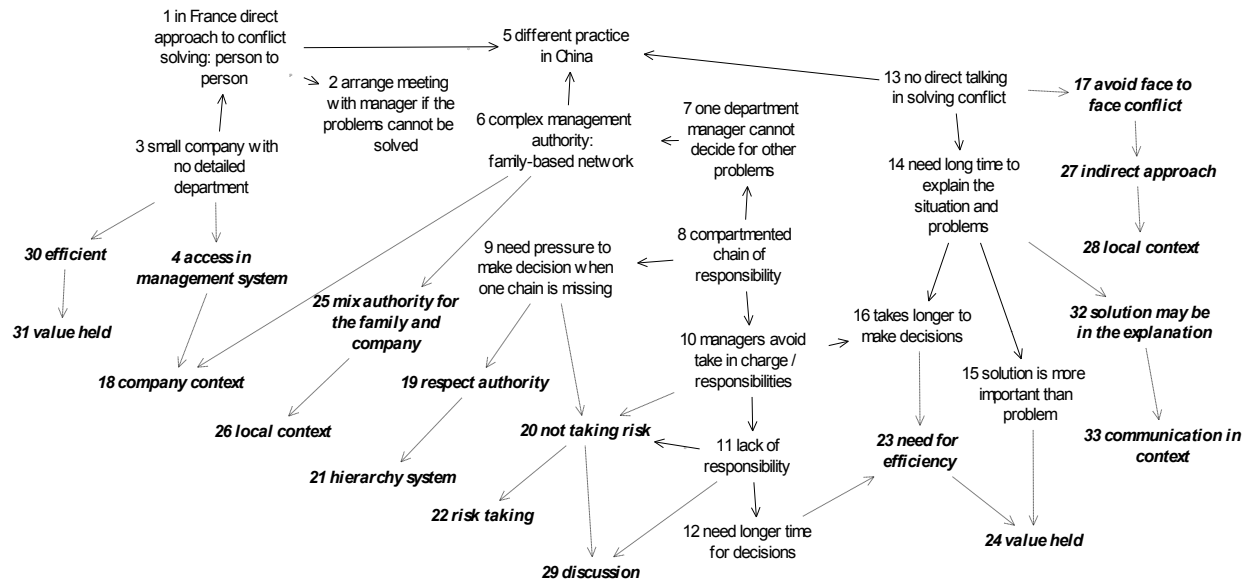
Map 5: Complete map of decision process conflict of subordinates – interview 2



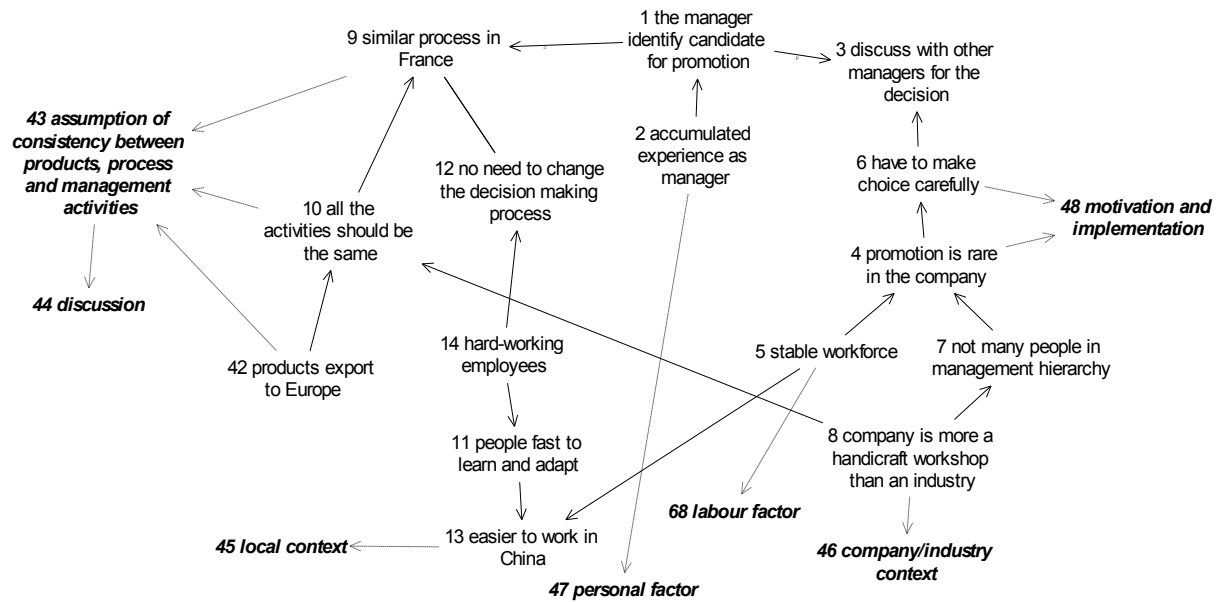
Map 6: Complete map of decision process conflict with same level managers – interview 2



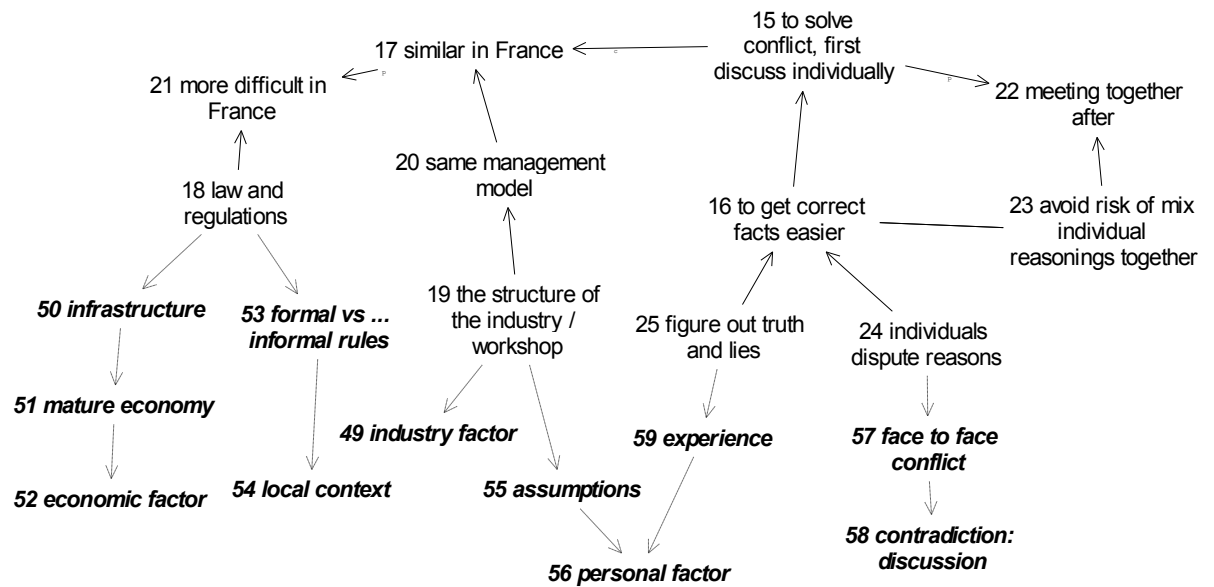
Map 7: Complete map of decision process conflict with same level managers – interview 4



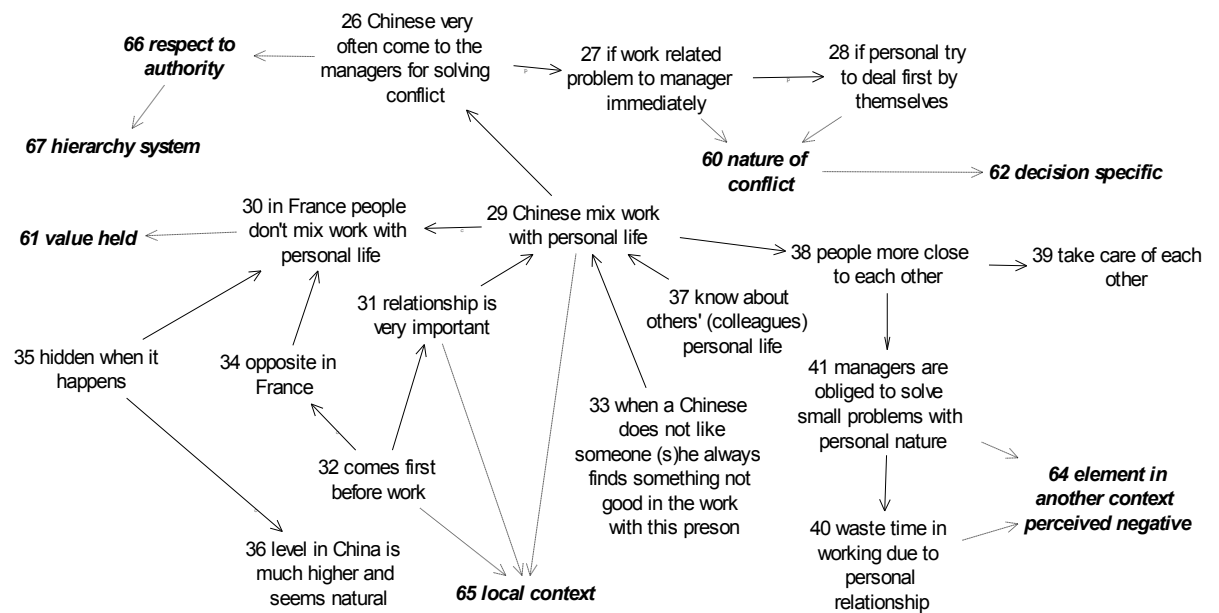
Map 8: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 5

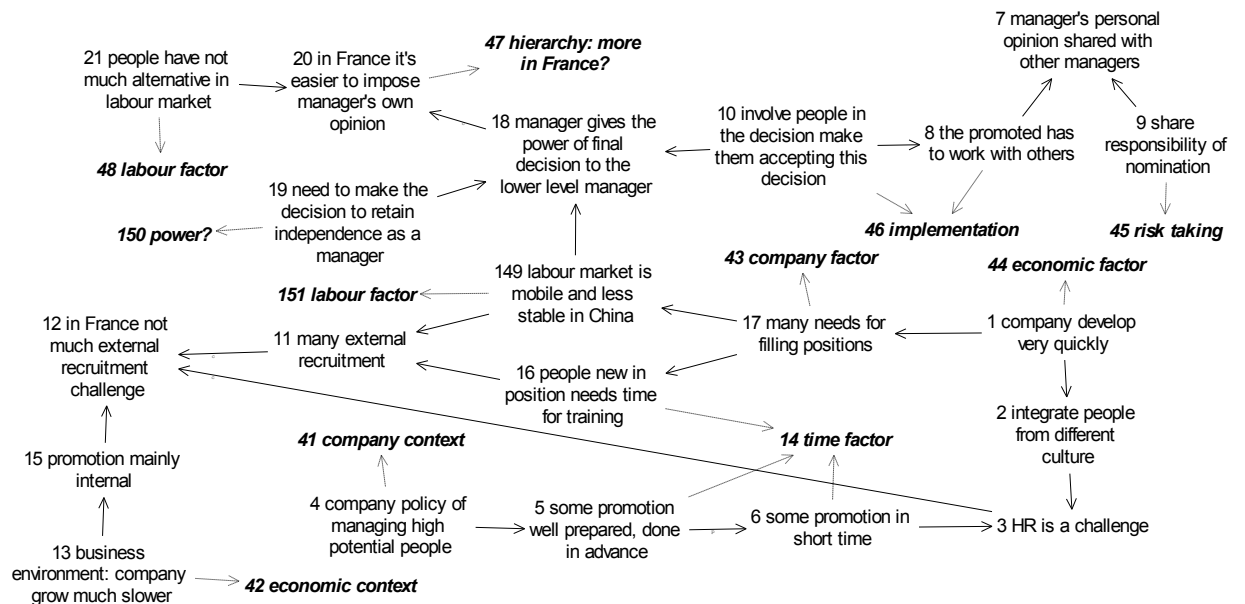


Map 9: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 5

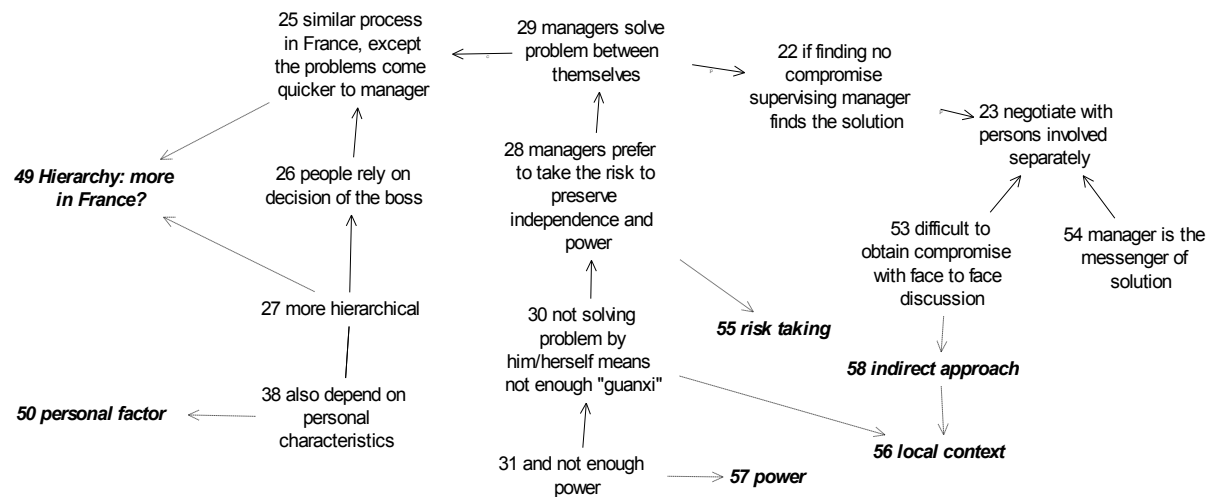


Map 10: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 5

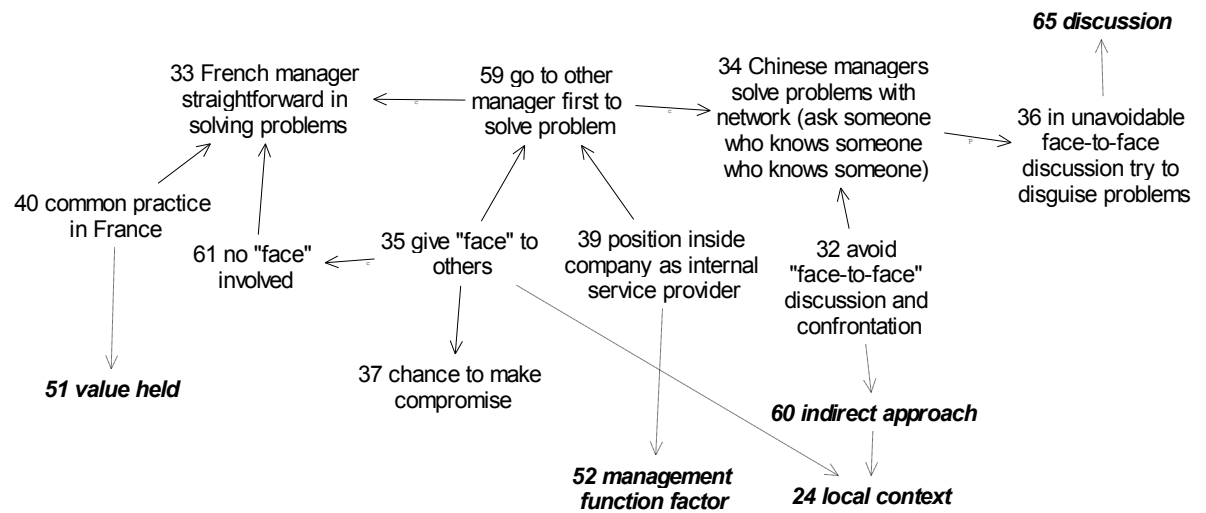


Map 11: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 6

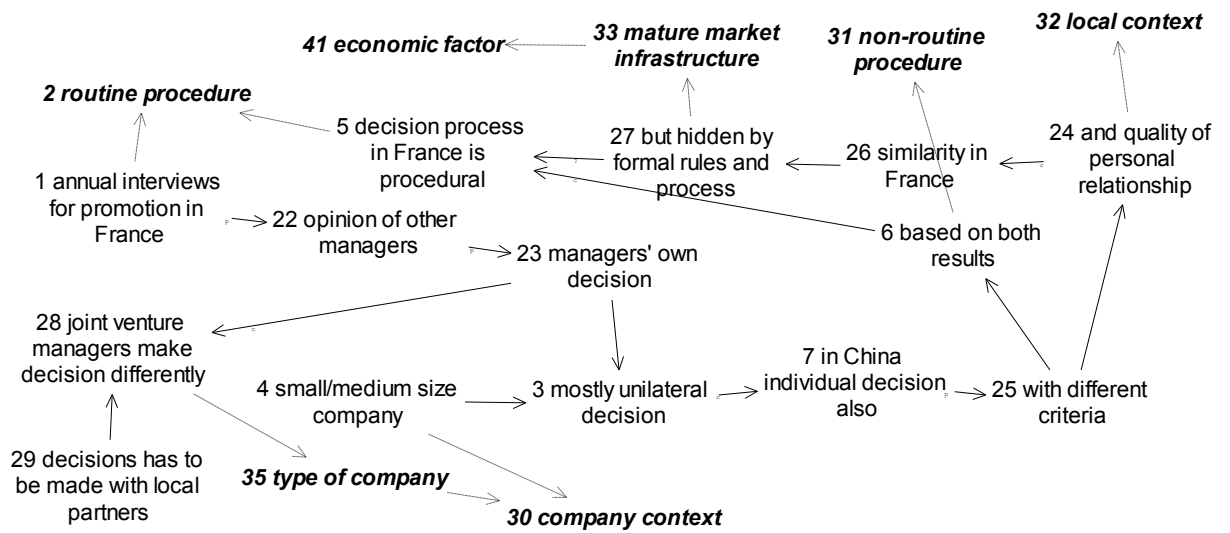
Map 12: Complete map of decision process for conflict among subordinates – interview 6



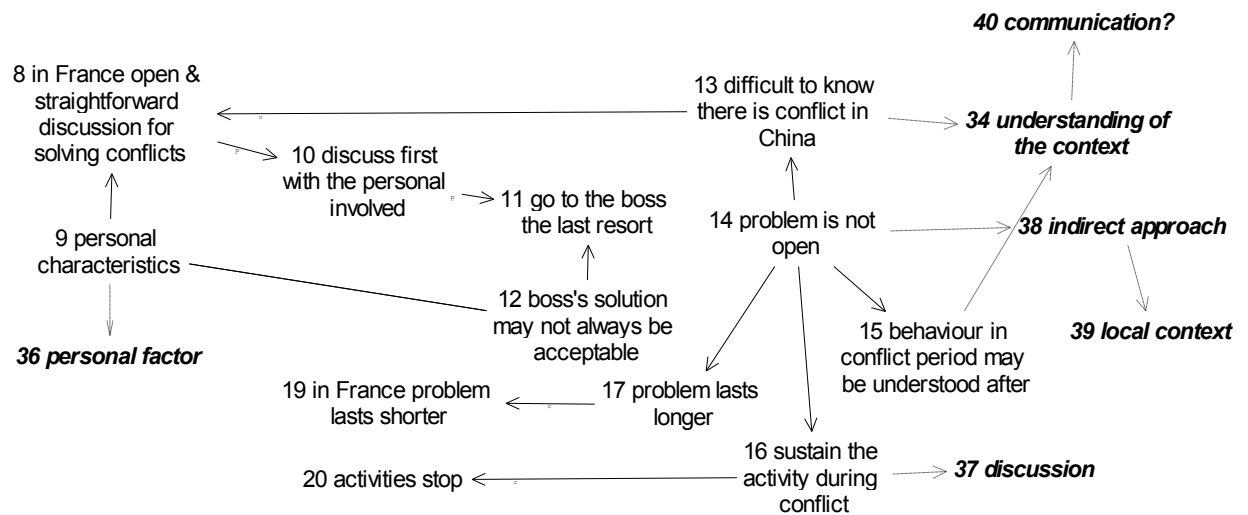
Map 13: Complete map of decision process for conflict with same level managers – interview 6



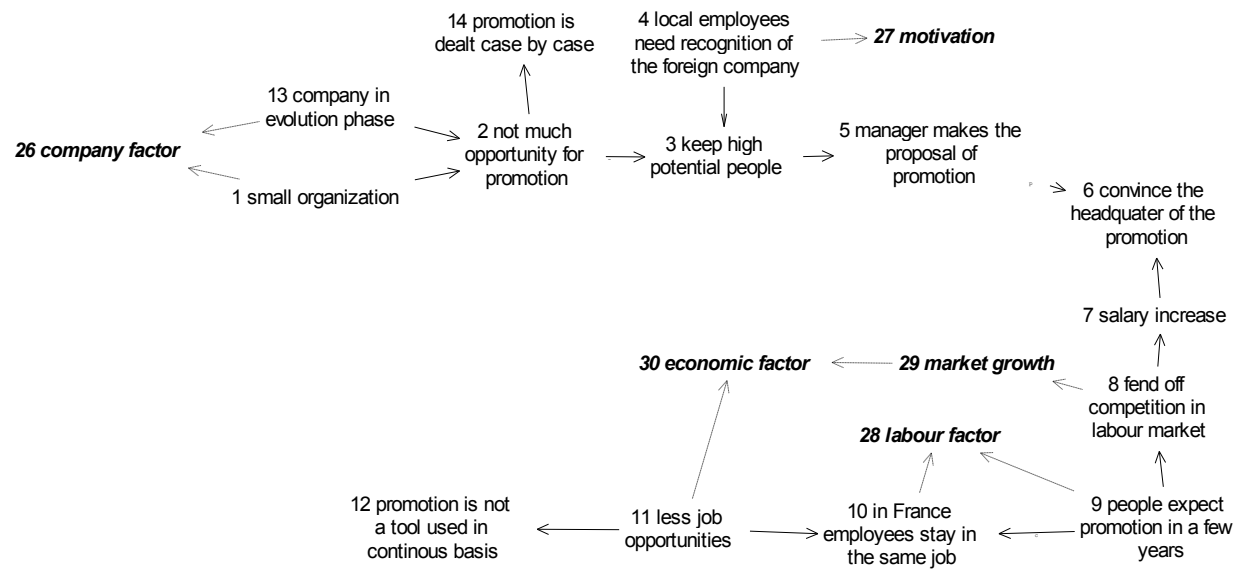
Map 14: Complete map of decision for promotion – interview 7



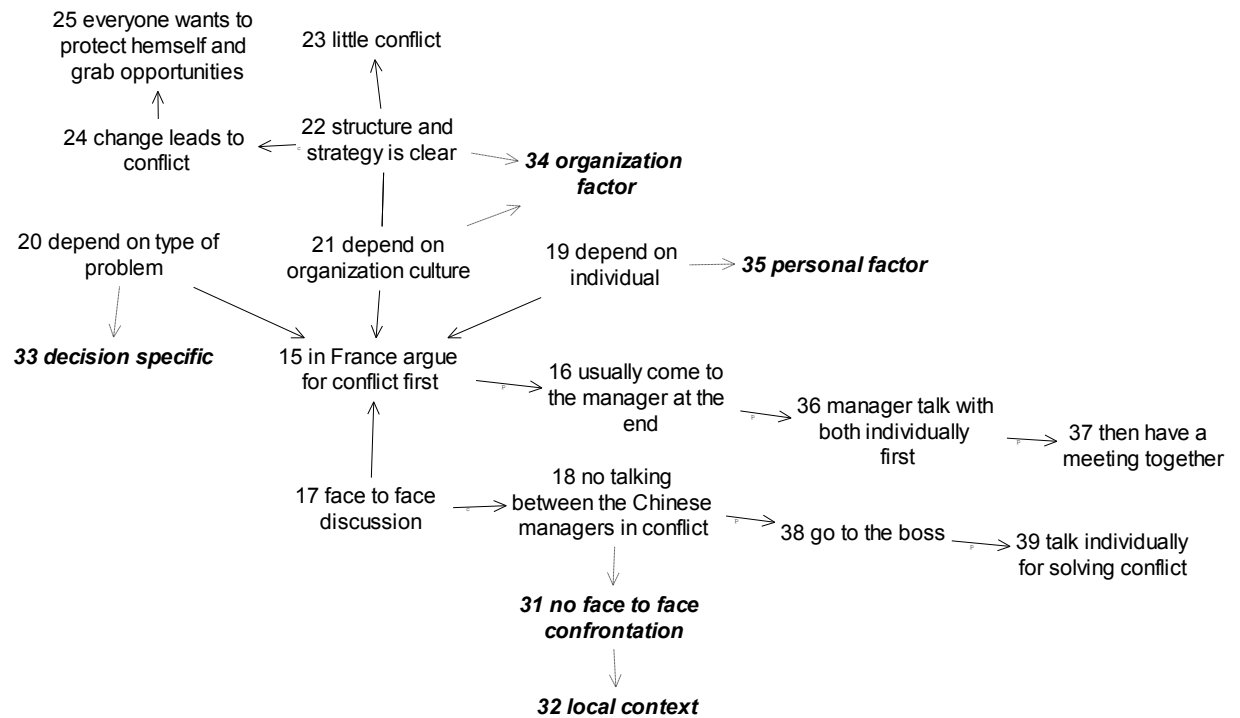
Map 15: Complete map of decision for conflict with same level manager – interview 7



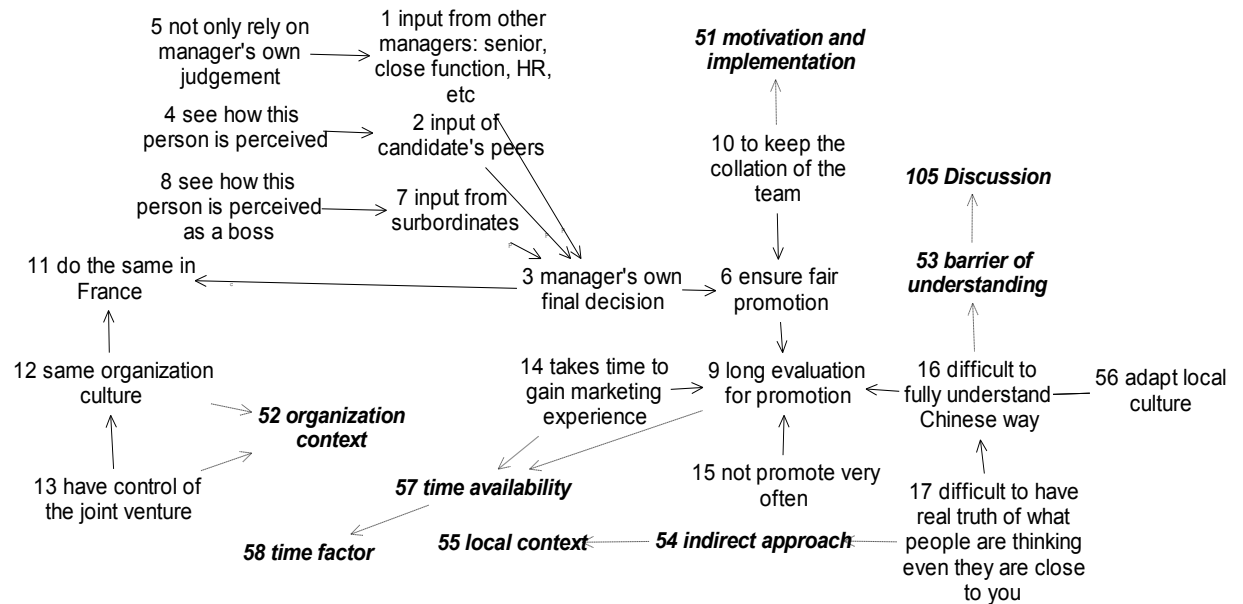
Map 16: Complete map of decisions for promotion – Interview 8



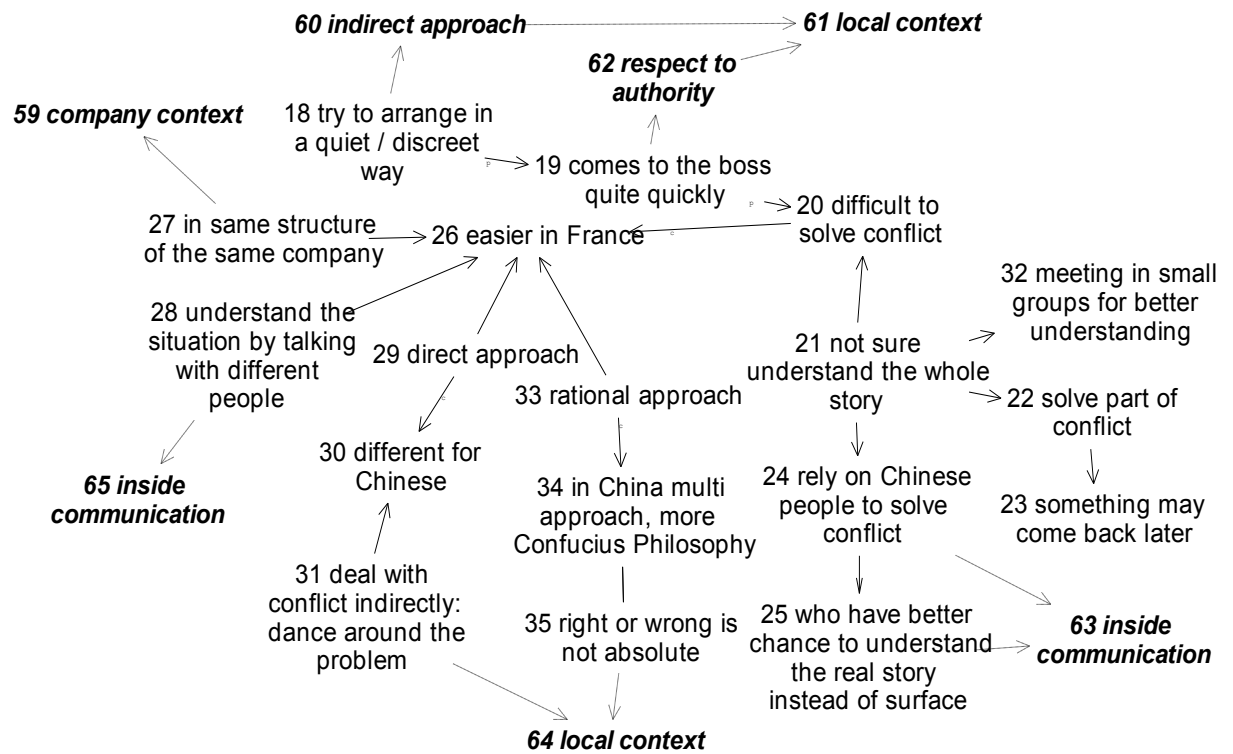
Map 17: Complete map of decision for conflict among subordinates – Interview 8



Map 18: Complete map of decisions for promotion – Interview 9



Map 19: Complete map of decision for conflict among subordinates – Interview 9



Map 20: Complete map of decision for conflict with same level manager – interview 9

